

# Making Life a Masterpiece (1916)



Orison Swett Marden



# MAKING LIFE A MASTERPIECE

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BY  
ORISON SWETT MARDEN

AUTHOR OF "PEACE, POWER AND PLENTY," "MIRACLE  
OF RIGHT THOUGHT," "VICTORIOUS ATTITUDE," ETC.

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CRAIG!  
MAKE YOUR LIFE  
A MASTERPIECE OF  
JOYFUL MOMENTS  
AS YOU MAKE A  
POSITIVE  
DIFFERENCE  
IN THE  
LIVES YOU  
TOUCH!  
ENERGETICALLY,  
John Henry

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# MAKING LIFE A MASTERPIECE

## CHAPTER I

### MAKING LIFE A MASTERPIECE

IN an editorial on the death of a noted gambler a leading New York daily said:

“If the man hadn’t started in as a gambler so young, continued as one so long, and as one been so successful, one would be tempted to think that gambling was to him a mere avocation, and no essential part of his life.”

This man was splendidly gifted by Nature with all the qualities and traits that would have enabled him to make his life a masterpiece, yet he died, leaving only the sorry reputation of a successful gambler.

He played the gambling game on a big scale. He was honest, as honesty goes in professional gambling, kind-hearted, had a high degree of

intelligence, good judgment, and a keen business instinct that would have made him successful in any calling. Withal he had a natural love of the beautiful, which he had carefully cultivated. His hobby was the collection of books and works of art, in which he showed excellent taste and judgment.

Here was a man who might have been a king among men had he so chosen. But, unfortunately, he chose early in life to be a gambler, and so, at the very start, ruined his godlike possibilities.

Within a week or two after the death of this man, the press of the whole country recorded the death of another man. And what a man! What a masterpiece he had made of his life! What a character he had builded; what a reputation he had won! What a legacy he had left to the world!

Every newspaper from the Atlantic to the Pacific, not only gave an account of his splendid career, but each had an editorial eulogizing his great work for humanity, and especially for his adopted country.

"Few Americans," said the *New York World*, "realize the debt that this country owes



to John Muir. A scientist with the vision of a poet, a passionate lover of Nature whose ideals were thoroughly practical, he taught a Nation to respect its own property and to preserve from wanton destruction what man could never replace. To his earnest preaching and personal influence more than any other circumstance the United States owes its system of national parks and forest preserves. But for his persistent efforts the Yosemite to-day would probably be a barren waste, its mountains denuded and its watercourses arid. What was accomplished there was the starting point in a great national plan to save from ruin the forests and watersheds of both coasts."

Think what posterity for all time owes this man, who, despite the combined hostility of lumbermen, landgrabbers, and the great modern god, material Progress, Greed, accomplished his mighty purpose.

If he had done nothing else but save from destruction some of the most magnificent of Nature's works, the world could never repay the debt it owes him. But, though his real vocation was that of a naturalist, his achievement in any one of his avocations of geologist, ex-

plorer, philosopher, artist, author, and editor, would have made a success of any ordinary man.

John Muir, it is true, was not an ordinary man. Only the giants here and there match his accomplishments. But none need die so poor as to have only the reputation of a successful gambler.

There is in the career of every human being a possible magnificent masterpiece, or a wretched, distorted daub. Whichever it proves to be it will be hung in civilization's gallery. It will be exhibited to the world as the embodiment, the evidence of that for which each life has stood.

One's career is not only an exhibit to the world, a contribution to civilization, but it is also our exhibit to our Maker, our account of what we have done with the talent He gave us, how we invested it and the returns we have gotten out of it. It is our final report.

One of the most pitiable things in human history is the spectacle of a man who has gambled away his chance in life, gambled away his possibilities, and when near the end of life awakens to the fact that the larger part of his powers

has never been utilized, that his almost finished career, which might have been a masterpiece, is only a smirched, unsightly daub.

The sort of man you will make of yourself, how you will be regarded by the world, whether people will admire and respect or despise you, whether you win the approval or the condemnation of your Maker,—all this is in your own hands. No matter where your lot may be cast, no power on earth can keep you from making a man of yourself, a superb character, a masterpiece.

The size of your fortune may be more or less an accident, but the size of the man you will bring out of your career, rests absolutely with you. This will not have to run the gauntlet of fire, of flood, of panic, or disaster. It will not be subject to loss or utter ruin by change of location, by the shifting tide of population in other directions or any other adverse turn of fickle fortune.

“I am not bound to win in what I attempt,” said Lincoln, “but I am bound to be a man. I am bound to be true to the best I know. Any departure from this is contemptible cowardice.”



There are possibilities of all sorts of disasters and misfortunes in the business world, in material conditions, which no human brain can forestall or prevent, but a man can make his life a masterpiece even amid the ruins of his business. He can stand out a superb figure even in the desolation of his property, when everything material has been swept away from him.

How many thousands of men in Belgium to-day who have lost everything they had on earth, their business, their property, their homes, their means of making a living, who have been stripped naked of everything by cruel war, yet are bigger, nobler, grander men than when fortune smiled on them. In many instances their wives and children have been lost, killed by stray shells, or have died from hunger and exposure. Yet these men still have that which lifts them above even such overwhelming misfortunes. They have that which bombs cannot kill, which siege guns cannot shatter, untarnished names, indestructible manhood.

The men whom we honor and look up to, those to whom the world erects monu-

ments, accomplish something infinitely bigger, grander than scraping together dollars. The men who merely play the dollar game have stood pretty low down in the scale of human values. The world may sometimes seem hard and selfish, but it never honors greed and selfishness. In the ultimate reckoning it cherishes the memory of those who have illustrated in their lives the finer human values.

There is something in human nature which makes us instinctively despise selfishness, the grasping greed that is always seeking its own interest. And, as instinctively, we love the man who gives himself to his kind, who gives unselfish service. We know that he is of the salt of the earth, that his value as an uplifter of humanity is beyond computation.

When Ralph Waldo Emerson was earning but a thousand dollars a year he was rendering a greater service to humanity than any rich man of his day. The little village of Concord, Massachusetts, has been made immortal by such souls as Emerson, Longfellow, Louisa M. Alcott, and her father, Margaret Fuller, and other illustrious members of the famous New England coterie. This village has rendered a

greater service to the world than has many a great city. Emerson's voice, like the shot which was fired at Lexington near by, has been heard around the world. The religion that started there is permeating all the creeds of the world.

Many people seem to think that they are under no obligation to make life as complete, as successful as possible. But this is precisely what we are here for—to evolve the real man or woman the Creator involved in each of us. We cannot be true to ourselves and shirk this obligation. Each was sent here with a divine message, and it is his business to deliver that message, to honor it royally, not to distort or mutilate it. The message is the work of a lifetime, the evolution of a superb manhood or womanhood, the grandest achievement of which a human being is capable.

No one can make the most of himself until he looks upon his life as a magnificent possibility, the material for a great masterpiece to mar or spoil which would be a tragedy. Without such an ideal, without an ambition to live the life triumphant, the life worth while, that which will call out the largest, completest, su-



perbest man or woman one is capable of being, there is no possibility of true success.

The object of our vocation should not be merely a living-getting. This was a mere incidental in the Creator's plan, only an inferior motive compared with the grander motive of making a life. Self-expression, self-enlargement, self-growth, the calling out of the man or the woman, the exercising of all one's powers of mind and body and soul—this should be the real meaning of an occupation or profession.

If we see in our day's work nothing but rent and food, clothing and shelter, taxes, a little pleasure and other incidentals, then we would better never have lived.

This is only a sordid, superficial view of one's life work. This is merely the perishable side of it, that which passes away.

The opportunity to be a man, a woman, the chance to unfold what the Creator has infolded in one, this is what our work should mean to us. The salary we earn, the money we make out of our talent or talents will afford us a very petty and mean satisfaction compared with that yielded by the opportunity of making such

a superb character as will raise one's manhood or womanhood to its highest possibility. As Emerson says, "The man is all—all things preach the indifference of circumstances."

The Creator could have provided our bread ready made on trees; we could have been spared the drudgery of hard work so far as our living is concerned. But there was something infinitely grander than the bread and butter side of life in the Creator's plan for us. We were sent here to school. Life is a great university for the unfolding of the mind, for developing character. In choosing our life work, when we are free to choose, we should remember this, and choose that which will call the biggest man or woman out of us and not that from which we can coin the most dollars.

It does not matter so much how we earn our living, provided it is honest. Self-training, self-discipline, self-improvement, the acquisition of personal power should be one's real aim.

Making life a masterpiece does not necessarily mean that one must engage in some high profession, some great special work or learned calling. All honest labor is dignified and ennobling. Many men have made masterpieces

of their lives as cobblers and have lifted this occupation into dignity and respect. Multitudes of farmers are raising farming to the height of a grand profession by mixing brains and character with the soil, and are making masterpieces of their lives. When forging at the anvil in a blacksmith's shop Elihu Burritt was forging his life into a grand masterpiece.

It may be necessary sometimes to make a living on a level lower than that of our highest ideal, but at the same time, we can, if we choose, also make a *life*. There is an Oriental saying, "If you have two loaves of bread, sell one and buy white hyacinths to feed your soul." Whatever one's vocation, one is always free to invest in that which will make one a larger, broader, nobler being, that which, in the long run, will be of infinitely more value than many investments in stocks and bonds. No matter what your occupation, though it be washing dishes or carrying a hod, you can always, if you will, be a thoroughbred. You can look up, live up through every moment of your daily routine. The humblest occupation may be glorified by the spirit put into it.

In the early history of our country many of



our noblest characters were shoemakers, cobblers, farmers, laborers. How a man happened to make a living in those days, provided it was respectable, was considered of very little importance compared with what sort of a man was behind the occupation.

*What* we do for a living does not matter so much as *how* we do it. It is the spirit in which we do our work that counts, and that counts through all eternity.

You cannot always tell from the things a man is compelled to do for a living what his real character is, what his tastes and inclinations are. It is his voluntary choices, what he chooses when he is free to choose, what he does when he is at liberty to do as he wills,—these, and the spirit he puts into his appointed daily routine, are the things that indicate the quality of the individual.

“I am determined to make my life count,” said a poor young immigrant with whom I was talking not long ago. Now, there is a resolution that is worth while, because it is backed by a high ambition, the determined purpose to be a man, to make his life one of service to humanity.



This young fellow works hard during the day, studying in a night school, and improving himself in every possible way in his odds and ends of time.

This is the sort of dead-in-earnestness that wins. This is the sort of material that has made America distinctive among all the nations of the earth. This is the sort of determination that gave us a Lincoln, an Andrew Jackson, an Edison, a John Muir—all our great men, native born or adopted sons.

Could any one have a nobler ambition than this—to make his life count? One cannot imagine its failure, backed up by dead-in-earnest endeavor.

Unfortunately, children are not, as a rule, reared with the right idea of what life or a vocation means. Multitudes of them grow up with the belief that life is a chance to get as much fun as possible, and to make oneself as comfortable and as free from care as opportunities will allow. Such children when they reach manhood or womanhood look upon a vocation as an unavoidable, disagreeable obligation to provide for the necessities of the body. Few of them are instructed in life-making or

taught that one's career should be a profession for man-making, woman-making, for the full, free development of our threefold nature, spiritual, mental and physical.

One of our greatest needs to-day is institutions for teaching people how to live, how to make living the art of arts, not merely how to make a living. As a matter of fact self-control, patience, consideration for others, how to face life the right way, how always to hold the right mental attitude, how to measure up to the ideals held up by the Christ,—these things are of infinitely more importance than mere scholastic training.

I am not belittling an education. It is of supreme importance. Indeed the boy or girl who is not willing to struggle for it, to make sacrifices to get the best education possible, will never make a masterpiece of life. An education gives us mastery of the tools with which we may make a career, not necessarily a masterpiece. The man who lives for self alone, whose life is not of value to the whole community, no matter what his education or calling, is a colossal failure. His life is not a masterpiece, but an unsightly, disgraceful

daub. No matter what his learning, his wealth, or his position, he has failed completely in the one great task his Creator set him—to make a man out of the material given him.

Yet how often we see men of mighty intellect and great achievements living entirely on the material plane, seeing nothing of the divinity of life.

How often, too, do we see little dried-up millionaires with only a corner of their brains developed,—that which presides over the grasping, greedy, animal propensities. Their ideality, their reverence, their humanitarian and social qualities have gone out of business from lack of use.

There is no text in that great Book of Life, the Bible, which we need to study quite so much as this one, "The life is more than the meat, and the body more than the raiment."

There can be no greater mistake than to grind all of our energy and our heart's blood, our very selves into the meat, the raiment and housing of life, and to devote only the crumbs, the odds and ends of our time and energies to man-making and woman-making.

Why, the thing ought to be reversed. Get-



ting something to eat and something to wear and a place to live in ought to be a side issue compared with making our lives, building men and women!

It would be nonsense to say that we need not concern ourselves at all about material things. As long as we have bodies that need food and clothing and shelter we must work either with our hands or brains, or with both, to supply those necessities. The point is, we need not bury ourselves to the exclusion of everything else in the money-getting or living-getting problem. This must be subordinated to our higher needs. As Theodore Parker well said, "The best thing that you can get in life is not money, nor what money alone brings with it. You must work for your manhood as much as for your money and take as much pains to get it and keep it, too."

Instead of spending ten, twelve, or fifteen hours a day chasing dollars without a thought of kindness or service for others and so utterly exhausting our energies that there is practically nothing left at the end of the day for life building, home or family building, except the mere scraps of our exhausted vitality, we

ought to make these things the very foundation stones of each days' routine.

"Help thou thy brother's boat across, and lo! thine own has reached the shore," is an old Hindoo proverb. An unselfish service rendered another in the course of a busy day will glorify the commonest work. A smile or a word of cheer and uplift to a discouraged soul is the finest and most enduring sort of paint to put into one's life picture.

A man is not a machine to be manipulated by outside forces. His motor power is inside of him. He can choose the direction in which he shall go. Every day he can say to himself with absolute assurance,

"Without capital, without influence, without pulls, yea, even in spite of the opposition of others, I can be true to myself, I can be a man, and can make my life a masterpiece.

"I am the only real enemy I shall ever have. The only one who can wreck my personal career, keep me from being a success is the man living inside my own skin.

"There is no destiny, no fate that can ruin me. Under God I am my own maker, my own destiny. I am the master of my fate, 'the captain of my soul.' "

## CHAPTER II

### PRACTICAL DREAMERS

RECENTLY a man whose whole life had been practically a failure bragged that there was one fault he had never been guilty of, and that was, building air castles.

Perhaps, my friend, thought I, that is the reason why you are where you are. If you had built air castles in your youth and put out a little more effort in trying to put foundations under them you probably would be enjoying yourself in one of them to-day.

Some people have a great contempt for dreamers. They pride themselves on their extreme practicality, and are fond of asserting the folly of building castles in the air. Yet every great achievement in the world's history was first foreshadowed in the mind of the achiever. It was "a castle in the air," an impalpable dream, a something dimly, and, in the beginning, vaguely outlined in the imagina-



tion before it became a real, substantial structure.

As a matter of fact there must be an air castle before there is a real castle. The plan precedes the building. Equally true is it that you must toil for the bricks and mortar that shall go into your castle or it will never come out of the air.

Our ideas and ideals can never be solid possessions until we express them in life. It is good to erect airy structures in the imagination, but we must bring them down and give them a solid footing on earth if they are ever to do us or the world any good. While they are in the air, they are impractical. If they never get over the borderland of the imagination they do us more harm than good.

If you are dreaming and at the same time pegging away to put a foundation under the immaterial structure in your brain, you are on the right road. Never mind if others call you a dreamer, a visionary, an impractical fellow, you are in goodly company. Practically all of the inventors, discoverers and other great achievers of the past were derided as ne'er-do-wells who would never amount to anything.



While they were planning and perfecting, mentally visualizing the creation they had in view, the scoffers laughed at them, called them idle visionaries, time-wasters. But these same "visionaries" and "time-wasters" proved to be the most practical of men, the greatest benefactors of the race.

Think of the debt which civilization owes to the dreamer, Elias Howe, who persisted in realizing his dream of the sewing machine! Who can estimate the revolution in manufacturing and in the condition of the poor people of the South wrought by Eli Whitney's dream of the cotton gin! Think of what the dreams of science have done for the farmer; dreams which have enabled him to mix brains with the soil, and have taken much of the drudgery out of his work!

Why the very discovery of the country in which American dreams were dreamed and realized in the past, and are being dreamed and realized to-day, was the result of years of Columbus's dreaming. None but a vigorous, practical dreamer would have persisted in sailing west day after day, week after week, with a crew in mutiny and ready to put him in chains.

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The civilization on this continent to-day is a dream realized. Every city is a dream. There were only Indians and wild beasts here when our forefathers landed, bringing practically nothing but their courage with them. But out of the nothing, out of the castles they builded in the air have come our homes, our cities, our institutions. Our Constitution was the inspired dream of Jefferson, Adams, Washington, Hancock and other dreamers. The dearest, the noblest and best things in our national life were but dreams in the beginning.

Our ancestors dreamed of the day when they should be emancipated from the drudgery which enslaved them, and when they could travel with ease and comfort. They dreamed of the time when they could communicate with their fellows in different parts of the world quickly, easily. They dreamed of comforts and luxuries in the home which have become realities for us. All of the inventions and discoveries, improvements and facilities which we are using and enjoying to-day were dreams to those who lived before us.

The Union Pacific Railroad was first conceived in the brain of a dreamer. Even so late

as in Daniel Webster's time, members of Congress decided that the great American desert was absolutely useless, and even Webster himself said it would be silly to think of building a railroad across it. He recommended that camels be imported to carry the mails to the Pacific coast.

Chicago is the result of a vision, less than a century old,—a vision which arose out of a little straggling Indian trading settlement. Salt Lake City was a dream of Brigham Young before it became in reality.

The man whom you condemn as a mere dreamer, my over-practical friend, may be living a much more real life than you, with all your vaunted wisdom. What is called dreaming brings out into the actual latent powers in the subject which matter-of-fact people never discover. If our dreams are sincere desires to achieve, not mere pipe-dreams, there is something deep within ourselves which comes out to meet them and helps to make them realities.

It was the dream of Professor Bell and his father which opened a new world to the multitudes who were living in the deaf mute's dungeon.



Who can estimate the number of human beings who would be sleeping at the bottom of the ocean to-day but for Marconi's dream? Not sixteen hundred alone, but all of the *Titanic's* passengers would have found a watery grave. Not only thousands of lives but a great many ships and a vast amount of property have been saved by this young man's dream, for which his associates ridiculed him and dubbed him an "impractical."

Only a comparatively few years ago, any one who talked seriously of mechanical flight in the air was looked at pityingly by the wise ones, and relegated at once to the list of cranks or madmen. Now, airships are taken almost as a matter of course, and the sight of one sailing through the air excites no surprise. The Wright brothers in this country continued and made practical the "dream" of Professor Langley and others preceding them who had toiled without reward. "Langley's Folly" was the name given to the machine constructed by Professor Langley, which, after his death, was found to work successfully.

We hear a great deal about the impracticableness of genius and of the artistic tempera-

ment, but have you ever stopped to think that the beautiful pictures and statues that delight our eyes and feed our imaginations, the wonderful music that stirs our souls to their depths, the poems and great writings that spur us to noble deeds—that all these beautiful creations were first dreams of the artist, the sculptor, the composer, the poet, the writer?

The old masters were criticized by their contemporaries as impracticals, dreamers, but we all know that their air castles, their mind pictures, are the priceless masterpieces of to-day. All our most precious realities, the fruits of centuries of human thought and toil were born in the imagination. They are somebody's dream children.

The dreaming power was given to us for a divine purpose. There are millions of people on the earth who could not endure existence but for the ability to live in dreamland at will. They would become insane were it not for the power to escape from their cruel environment, to fly from trouble and suffering into a dreamland of bliss and beauty, a land which they people with their own imagination.

What would become of the poor wretches

in our prisons but for the inner vision which carries them outside the prison walls to their old homes, there to re-live the scenes of their childhood with those who love them, while their bodies are locked behind iron bars?

What a relief it is to those who are shut in by a depressing environment, who suffer all the pangs of poverty, discouragement, and failure, or who are chained to those who do not understand or love them, to be able to rise into dreamland and live, for the time at least, in a land of harmony, of loveliness, of joy! What refreshment and strength it is for mind and body to soar above the worries and frets and cares of the day and renew oneself, as it were, in a spiritual bath in dreamland!

One of the most charming women of my acquaintance, one who has gone through experiences of suffering, of sorrow and of losses that fall to the lot of few mortals, owes her salvation, she declares, to her dreams, or as she calls them, her waking visions. Although well on in years, bereft of all her loved ones and compelled to practice rigid economy in order to make both ends meet, yet she is sweeter, more magnetic than even in girlhood, simply because



she can at will rise out of her iron environment and refresh herself in the world beautiful of her own imagination. There, she avers, she hears harmonies more entrancing than any strains of voice or musical instrument that ever reached human ears; sees beauties more ravishing than were ever perceived by the body's eye.

The ability to rise and live with God in a land of harmony, truth and beauty, the power to free ourselves temporarily, at least, from the problems that fill us with care and anxious thought and to renew our souls is one of the greatest gifts of Divine Love.

The time will come when the proper use of the imagination as an educator, a developer, a creator of happiness will be treated, and taught as a science. Then people will learn to control and guide the mental force so as to direct it into channels that will lead to constructive work.

The impractical dreamers are those who spend the most of their time in dreamland. These people never seem to discover that this is a very real world. Their feet rarely touch the earth. Their air castles remain air cas-



ties. They do not put bricks and mortar about them and anchor them to the earth so that they can live in them.

The one talent men who work their visions out in the actual are of more use to the world than the ten talent men who live all the time in dreamland. This is why we see the ordinary, practical one talent doer everywhere outdistancing the ten talent dreamer who never gets down to business, who never does anything but dream.

The measure of our usefulness to society is not gauged by what we think or dream or promise, but by what we actually achieve or the things we start or put in the way of accomplishment by those who come after us.

Some of our greatest leaders of thought, forerunners of a new order of things, were called dreamers because the visions they saw did not materialize during their lives. Their great work consisted in pointing the way, blazing the first steps on the trail to new truths. The pagan world called the disciples of Christ visionaries, madmen, because they preached and taught a code of ethics that could not be understood by the mass of their contemporar-

ies. The great Master himself was not understood even by the little band of chosen ones, the apostles, whom he had picked out to carry on His work. Even He was derided as a dreamer, mocked at, spat upon, crucified as a preacher of sedition.

Many men in every age who have been called impractical dreamers were really prophets predicting things that were possible. The world could see nothing in the direction in which they looked, but they saw light, the dawn of possibilities which eventually became realities. It is true that many of them dropped into the ground before the sun rose or their predictions came true, but they had set the feet of their successors on the right path; the air castles of the past grew into the noble edifices of the present.

Think of what the world owes to our forefathers' dream of democracy. That mighty dream which crumbled thrones and toppled monarchies in the past has gone on increasing in vividness and strength until to-day mankind is actually talking of a World Republic.

One of the things that keeps many people back is the foolish habit of stifling their aspira-

tions, discouraging their dreaming propensity. They say to themselves, "What is the use of dreaming about the wonderful things I am going to do in the future? There is no such achievement in store for me. I am not a genius. I must content myself with an ordinary career." These negative thoughts and assertions chill their youthful ardor with the result that their ambition sags, their ideals shrivel, and, having no great life incentive, they drop into a humdrum routine and fall far below the level they might have attained.

Whatever you do, don't discourage your dreaming propensity. Your heart's desires are not empty vaporings. They foreshadow possible realities. Man was made to aspire, to look upward. Imagination was intended to play a tremendous part in our careers, our destiny. The man who only sees what actually exists to-day never progresses; it is the man who sees ahead, who anticipates, who forecasts the future, that forges ahead.

The man without a vision, who does not dream, is always narrow, limited. If he is a business man, he is the slave of routine, a slave of his ledger. He is interested in things, not



in ideas, or ideals. He will talk business, he is interested in money-making matters and nothing else. He can not talk about music, or art, or books. He is not interested in politics, philosophy, psychology, or human welfare. His mind is confined within the narrow limit of *things*; it is circumscribed by Self. There is no point of interrogation in his mind. He is content, as he will tell you, to let well enough alone. He reaches out only for material things. He never reaches upward. His mind does not aspire; it grovels. His ideals are low-flying. He is literally tied to earth.

It is a sorry day for a man when he thinks his dreaming time is past, when he ceases to build air castles and to picture the wonderful things he is going to do in the future. Imagination means hope, and when that is dead we are only half alive.

I am always sorry to hear men in middle life talking about their fading visions and saying that their dreaming days are over. No more unfortunate idea ever crept into a man's head than that at a certain arbitrary age he has reached the zenith of his power, and soon



thereafter will be going down the decline of life. Why, I have seen men of fifty and sixty more full of vigor and vim, mental and physical, than their juniors by fifteen or twenty years. All our years should slant upward, never downward. Life should be a continual ascent, a triumphal march onward, successward.

There is no more reason for us to begin to make ourselves somber and over-serious when we leave our youthful days behind than there is for us to cease cultivating our mental and spiritual faculties. It is just as much our duty to enjoy living at every period of our existence as it is to be useful. And we cannot be very useful when we are miserable, when we have soured on life, because unhappiness dulls the faculties and takes the edge off our ambition.

If we live normally and up to our best through two or three score years our added experience, our increased knowledge and wisdom, the garnered strength of our longer period of discipline, should more than compensate for any little loss of agility or of youthful buoyancy and sprightliness. There will be no

decline in life as long as we cling to our vision, and the mind is kept young, but where there is no vision the people age, dry up and perish. High ideals, lofty thinking, noble purposes, useful endeavor, kindness, an optimistic outlook, a mind ever open to new ideas,—these are the factors which keep man growing and make one sixty, seventy or a hundred years young instead of as many decades old.

It does not matter whether you are fifty or fifteen, you will find that if you encourage your dreaming propensities you will tend to bring out new powers which, perhaps, you did not know you possessed. We are all conscious that we have a great deal of unused ability, but we don't know just how to get hold of it. Often we don't know what it is, but we feel that there is something in us, which, if we could only utilize it, would add wonderfully to our success in life. Now, the way to bring this latent ability out is to try in every way possible to make your dreams realities. Nothing that the mind of man can conceive is impossible. The dreamers of to-day are the achievers of to-morrow. "And forever they are dreamers who make their dreams come true."

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The mind is the storehouse of ideas and ideals, the architect of our careers. It makes our success or our failure, our heaven or our hell. We don't need to go out of the flesh to find happiness or torment. We dream ourselves into one or the other state here and now.

My dream conception of heaven is a place of indescribable beauty where no sense of unrest, discord, disaster or unhappiness ever enters. It is to me a place or condition where no one is envious or jealous, where no one tries to take advantage of another, and where all are interested in each other's welfare. In this dream heaven of mine each is joyously working at the thing he loves best to do. Harmony and love illuminate every face. Happiness so fills the atmosphere that there is no room for discord. Unrest, anxiety, worry, disappointment are unknown. The shadow of fear never enters here. Love reigns supreme, and—that dream place is possible right on this planet.



## CHAPTER III

### WHERE YOUR OPPORTUNITY IS

IN the early forties Captain Sutter, an immigrant from Switzerland, bought a piece of land from a Californian, and built a sawmill at Colona, on the American River, a few miles northeast of the present Sacramento. On the bank of a ditch, which had been dug back of the mill to carry off water, Marshall, one of Sutter's men, saw some yellow specks sparkling in the dirt, gathered a little of it, washed it, and carried it to the house. That evening when the men came from work, Marshall said to them, "I believe I have found a gold mine." This started the great gold fever of 1848 and the rush from all over America to the Golden Gate.

The man from whom Captain Sutter had bought the piece of land never dreamed he was selling a gold mine. He traveled a long distance in search of a better opportunity than

he had found in the land he had sold for a song, but so far as is known, he found no fortune. But it is said that nearly forty million dollars' worth of gold ore have been taken out of this old farm. One of its owners has been receiving as his share of this treasure a hundred and twenty dollars in gold every fifteen minutes night and day for many years.

Seven years after Mammoth Cave was discovered in 1802, its owner sold it for forty dollars.

A farmer in Pennsylvania parted with his farm for eight hundred and thirty-three dollars and went to work with a cousin in Canada who had discovered coal oil there. The man who bought the farm, while watering his cattle at a brook which flowed through his land noticed a scum on the surface of the water. This led to the discovery of the famous oil wells, which a geologist says have been worth a billion dollars to the State of Pennsylvania.

Many young men who read this will doubtless say that these are extreme cases, and that there is no such hidden wealth anywhere in their vicinity. Perhaps not just in these forms, but there are gold mines and oil wells,

figuratively speaking, in every rural district, in every little town and village in the country. There are others more alert, more wide awake, with keener eyes and minds who will amass fortunes and make great reputations out of what seems so commonplace, so ordinary to you.

The story of Ali Hafed is repeated over and over again, every day in the year in every quarter of the globe.

Every one is familiar with this old Oriental story, which tells how the Persian farmer, Ali Hafed, sold his fertile farm on the banks of the Indus for less than half its value, to travel all over the world in search of diamonds. After years of fruitless search, Ali Hafed, starving and almost naked, died in despair in a distant land. Meantime, enormous quantities of diamonds of priceless value,—the far-famed diamond mines of Golconda,—had been discovered on the despised farm, on which Ali Hafed could not find the riches he so ardently desired.

There are multitudes of young men who like Ali Hafed cannot see opportunities where they are. They feel sure, as he did, that they



can find rich prizes further on, somewhere else, in any other place than where they are.

Most people are blind to opportunities near them. They have not the gripping power, the grit to stick and hang on until the opportunity ripens, or they lack the vigorous initiative to undertake what would uncover "acres of diamonds."

There are people in the failure army to-day who have let opportunities slip through their fingers that would have made rich and famous men who could see and use them.

You do not need to go to Chicago, to San Francisco, or to New York to seek opportunities. There are gold and diamond mines everywhere waiting to be discovered. It matters not whether you were born in a log cabin or in a mansion, in the city or in the country, if you are made of winning stuff you will find your opportunities, for life all about you pulsates with them. What is requisite is alertness to seize chances, responsiveness to the slightest suggestion of ambition. Not very far from you, at this moment, in the very place which to you seems so barren of chances, somebody is finding a mine of diamonds.

Edison found one selling papers on the Grand Trunk Railroad. Carnegie found his diamond mine in a telegraph office. Wanamaker found his pushing a cart through the streets of Philadelphia. Marshall Field made his first discovery of diamonds in a little store in Pittsfield, Mass.

Cyrus McCormick discovered a diamond mine in a grist-mill where he made his famous reaper. Michael Faraday discovered one washing bottles and experimenting with an old pan and glass vials in the attic of an apothecary's shop.

Opportunities are everywhere, but they are multiplied in our country. America is another name for Opportunity.

The great opportunity belongs to him who can see it, to him who can grasp it. The better part of your chance is right inside of you.

There were plenty of boys who could see no opportunity for Charles Schwab in driving a stage coach, or working as a boy in the steel works. Andrew Carnegie's companions could not see any great opportunity for him in delivering telegrams. No doubt the other railroad newsboys laughed at young Edison's

queer little laboratory, fitted up in a baggage car where he used to experiment between stations.

I remember very well when Alexander Bell was working out his telephone invention, how his "foolish experiments" were common jest among his students, when he was a young professor in Boston University. Shares of the stock of the original Bell Telephone Company were offered and found few backers at twenty-five cents a share. Only Professor Bell saw the gold mine in his first crude experiments.

Many a self-made man, when a poor boy, found his opportunity in a wheel-barrow, a pushcart, or a boot-black stand or selling papers in the street. Many a railroad president found his opening as a brakeman on a train, when all that other brakemen saw in the same circumstances was the week's pay envelope.

Opportunities are multiplying on every hand. Never before in the history of the world were there such wonderful openings for the ambitious, for the efficient, as in this era in which we are living. Where there were barely a half dozen desirable vocations a cen-



tury ago, to-day there are hundreds. Everywhere men and women are exploding the very excuse you are pleading for your meager life.

Not long since a Chicago bootblack won high honors at Columbia College. A news-boy distinguished himself in the same way at Brown University, and there were similar cases at several other universities. A farmer boy led the honor men of Yale's graduating class, and a poor negro boy, who paid his way through college, was among thirteen students of the highest rank. Time and again a negro has been on the roll of the honor men of Harvard. Now, if negro boys, with all the handicaps of race prejudice and the constant suggestion of inferiority impressed on their minds on every hand, can achieve such triumphs, there is no excuse for the poorest of white boys and girls, who, with their superior advantages, fail to make good.

Most of us over emphasize the opportunity and underestimate the value of the right spirit, the right attitude toward life. This is everything. In fact, if this is right, if one has the climbing, getting on spirit, if he faces life in the right way, toward hope, toward expecta-

tion of winning out; if he faces life with optimism and faith he will find opportunities a-plenty.

“On every corner, street or way, opportunity stands out bold.” But we are “opportunity blind,” we simply cannot see chances until they are beyond us. We are dreaming or wool gathering when a good opportunity comes along, and we do not recognize it until it has gone by. Then we see it plainly,—when it is out of reach. It would seem that opportunities must be seen in a certain perspective to be recognized. Their nearness often appears to paralyze our senses and we actually mistake them for calamities.

We laugh at the mule which imagines that the grass in his neighbor's pasture, though it is a part of the same sort of field, is so much sweeter than that in his own, and strains his neck over the bars to secure it. Yet we find the same trait which prompts the lower animal to trespass, just as strongly marked in the higher animal—man. Children get tired of their toys, their surroundings, and think if they could only have what belongs to their companions how much happier they would be. How

quickly a baby will drop whatever he is playing with to seize that which another child has.

We men and women are only grown-up children. A tendency to undervalue what we have and to magnify what others have, seems to be an element of our nature. Most of us look at our own possessions, our own surroundings and our own condition through the big end of the telescope. They look small and mean compared with those of our neighbors, which we look at through the other end of the glass. The grass in the adjoining pasture is so tempting; it looks so luscious and juicy, so much sweeter and tenderer than that in our own, and we look over the fence with longing eyes.

Everywhere we find people who are dissatisfied with their lot, who think they would be happy if they could only get somewhere else, into some other occupation. They see only the limitations in their own vocations, the opportunities in those of others. The shopgirl would be an actress; the cook would change places with her mistress; the butler with his master; the lawyer would be a doctor; the doctor a lawyer. The farmer bemoans his



hard lot, and longs to exchange his life of drudgery for the career of a merchant or a manufacturer. The country boy leans on his plow-handle and looks toward the city with hungry eyes. If he could only be free from the slavery of the farm, he thinks, wear good clothes, get hold of a yardstick and stand behind a counter! Happiness, fortune, opportunity—everything,—lies yonder. Around him he can see only misery, toil, poverty,—nothing desirable. The city youth, behind a counter, or sitting on a high office stool, rails at fate for confining him to the limits of brick walls and the dreary details of merchandise. Oh, if he could only travel to distant countries, or even have the freedom of farm life! Life would be worth something then. But now—he has no opportunity!

How much energy has been lost, how many lives have been spoiled by this fruitless longing for other fields, opportunities out of reach! What is the use of trying to reach into your neighbor's pasture when you do not know what bitterness may lie at the root of its growth, hidden from your sight, when you have never tried to develop or to call out the sweetness,

the hidden opportunities which dwell in your own?

There are plenty of farmers in this country who barely manage to eke out a meager existence upon land which covers, perhaps, rich deposits of mineral, of oil or of coal, or from soil which is capable of enormous production if they only mixed brains with it.

Do not waste time dreaming of great far-away opportunities; do the best you can where you are. Open your petals of power and beauty and fling out the fragrance of your life in the place that has been assigned to you. If you find yourself bound within a narrow sphere by aged parents or crippled, dependent brothers or sisters, or weighed down by a mortgage on the home, do not despair and say, "What is the use of wasting my life in this limited environment?" Some of the grandest characters in all history have blossomed and borne magnificent fruit in just such limited fields. The potency, the virtue of the opportunity is in the person who can see and use it. Your greatest opportunity is in your immediate environment.

"Dig right down in your potato-field—dig

deep and thoroughly and you will locate a bonanza mine, or an oil gusher, without going 'way out West' to Nevada or California. You may not take your wealth out of the ground in gold ore or in oil, but you will in big heavy plentiful tubers if you plow deep and fertilize properly." Don't admit to yourself that your home town has no place for you, that it is too small for you, or you are too big for it.

Opportunity is not reached by a commutation ticket. It usually is reached by two strong arms and an honest heart—often beating beneath a ragged jacket.

Opportunities are everywhere,—in the earth, in the air, in the factory, in the shop, in the store, in the home, on the farm,—there is no place where opportunity does not dwell.

To the man who is determined to get on in the world, every circumstance in life may be turned to advantage. There is for any one in an opportunity, just what one sees in it, no more, no less. One man sees nothing in a painting which awakens ecstasy in another and arouses his very soul. One sees nothing in a book which proves a turning point in another's life. The "chance" is in the man, the "open door" is in his own mind's eye.



Man, to-day, heart-weary with the sorrow, sin and failure of his past life, feels that he could live a better life if he could only have another chance, if he could only live life over again, if he could only start afresh with his present knowledge and experience. He looks back with regretful memory to the golden days of youth and sadly mourns his wasted chances. He then turns hopefully to the thought of a life to come. But, helpless, he stands between the two ends of life, yet thirsting for the chance to live a new life, according to his bettered condition for living it. In his blindness and ignorance, he does not realize that the new life is all around him, that he has but to reach out and take it. Every day is a new life, every sunrise but a new birth for himself and the world, every morning the beginning of a new existence for him, a new, great chance to put to new and higher uses the results of his past living.

Now, we hear a great deal about the poor boy's chances being swallowed up by the change in economic conditions and the great combinations. But as a matter of fact there never was a time when poor boys did not have

a chance. Poor girls and poor boys have furnished the backbone and the sinews of civilization. There always has been a chance for them and there always will be, because they will do what the rich will not do; they will develop power, a wonderful creative force in their very effort to rise to the top, which the rich boy, as a rule, never will, because he lacks motive.

There were splendid chances for success fifty years ago, but comparatively few got a strangle-hold on them, just because even then the majority had their backs turned to them and were gazing with longing eyes upon the "golden days" of 1848. There are lots of people who miss splendid chances because they are looking after the one that has just gone by and always regretting that they missed it. They never cease telling you of the wonderful opportunities they have had, but they do not seem to realize that even while they are talking and regretting what they have missed, other good opportunities may be at that very moment crossing their path.

Can you still talk about no opportunity for inventive genius when, for instance, eighty per cent. of our range heat yet goes up the chim-

ney? There is an opportunity waiting for us, beckoning to us, imploring us to make use of it at every turn.

All through life we are passing by great opportunities in the shape of small duties, only to be disappointed with those other things which looked so grand at a distance but seemed to shrink and shrivel on our approach. But those who remained behind with the little responsibilities that we flouted, often made fortunes and reputations. Out of what we threw away as worthless or too small for our attention they wove their success.

The good opening, the great opportunity is always essentially in ourselves. The power to see and develop it is in ourselves. Sometimes it means staying just where we are and downing every difficulty and discouragement, and sometimes it means dropping everything, breaking all ties and faring forth into the unknown. In the same flower from which the bee extracts honey, the spider finds poison. From the same material, one man may build a palace, another only a hovel. In just the same way, one man sees a splendid opportunity for the exercise of his highest powers where another sees only difficulty and limitation.



Luther Burbank, who leads the world in his wonder-working specialty, found his first opportunities in a little garden on the town common in Fitchburg, Massachusetts, and on a farm at Cape Cod. They opened the door, that pointed the way to the great horticultural farm and the magnificent discoveries at Santa Rosa.

Edison found his opportunity in the baggage car when he was a newsboy on a railroad train. Michael Angelo went into the gardens of St. Peter's and with his own hands dug the rich yellow ochre, and from the Vatican shrubbery distilled his wonderful purples, reds, blues and greens, that made his pictures famous.

Bunyan found an opportunity in Bedford jail to write the greatest allegory of the world on the twisted paper that had been used to cork the bottles of milk brought to his cell.

The most important constituent in success is to get busy with the little opportunities. If we take care of the little ones the big ones will take care of themselves.

Thousands of successful men have found their opportunities merely in doing the most

ordinary things better than any one else ever had done them, in filling their humble positions better than they had ever before been filled. Many of the most signal successes have turned upon comparatively insignificant things.

The very habit of being alert for opportunities, of grasping them, and wringing every possibility out of them brings more opportunities, more power. By the law that "to him that hath shall be given," used opportunities open doors to new ones.

Every sale gives a chance for the making of a merchant; every client is an opportunity to draw other clients; every sermon is an opportunity for a larger field, for greater usefulness; every business transaction is an opportunity to be polite, to be manly, to be square, to be businesslike, methodical, is an opportunity to make friends and thus open the door to something larger. Every responsibility thrusts upon you a chance to prepare for a higher trust. Stamping your character and your manliness or your womanliness upon your work, increases your power and thus opens the door to a place higher up.

The greatest opportunity for any human being is the chance to become all that it is in him to become. Opportunities do not *come*; they are *made*, and they are just like and equal to the ability and the effort used in bringing them about.

Did you ever know a man to amount to anything who waited for favorable circumstances, waited for opportunities to come to him? Remember that nothing moves in this world until it is moved by some force greater than itself.

I have often had letters from young people who chafe at their limitations, who are much troubled because of their limited chances, their poor equipment. They long for broader fields. They say that they are hemmed in, that their talents are restricted, that they have no opportunity in their narrow, humdrum existence to do anything great.

Now, I have followed the career of many of these complainers, and I have never known any one of them to accomplish much even when he got into a wider sphere.

It is a law of all progress that we must open the door next to us before the one ahead of that will swing for us to enter.



Waiting for an opportunity is a great ambition-killer, an energy-sapper. I know people who have been waiting around for years for "just the right opportunity," and year by year their enthusiasm wanes and their energy wastes. It has been said that "by the time a fool has made up his mind the opportunity has gone by."

You may depend upon it that people who do things in this world, *make opportunity*. They never wait for it, they dig for it, fight for it, scale the stars for it.

Thousands of young people who are longing to get on, and wondering at the "luck" which enables others to advance faster than they do, little imagine that the same "luck" resides in themselves, that the power to advance is in their grasp, that the opportunity lies in the slumbering power which they must awaken, or remain forever nobodies.

"I have seen gleams in the face and eyes of a man, that have let one look into a higher country," says Carlyle. There is that in every man if he only knows how to draw it out which will lead him to the "higher country."

The greatest forces are not in the thunder,

nor in the fire of volcanoes, nor in the storms and tempests which wreck and ruin, but in the silent, unseen motions of nature. Scientists tell us that there is enough chemical force in a few acres of growing grass to run all the machinery in the United States. Yet, if we go into the meadows and listen, we will hear only the song of the birds, the murmur of the water in the brook, as it rushes over the pebbles, or the rustling of the wind in the grass. All else is silent, but we feel that we are in the midst of a mighty power, that tremendous operations are going on under our very feet—operations which would astonish the greatest scientist, which would make the most learned philosopher painfully conscious of the limitations of his knowledge.

If we could only see and handle the forces which are calling the coloring out of the sunlight, forcing the sap and nourishment up from the black soil, mixing the paints for the thousand hues in the tinting of flower and leaf, we should be lost in wonder and admiration. Here is power indeed! Here are these automatic forces working in silence, yet generating enough energy to crush the Alps or to hurl the ocean from its bed!

We are all reservoirs of power, and what we make of ourselves, what we achieve in life, what we do for the world, is dependent on the extent to which we draw on our hidden forces, to the extent that we give God his opportunity in us.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE TRIUMPH OF COMMON VIRTUES

RUSKIN was one day walking through some of the narrow streets of London with a friend who complained constantly of the soot and mud. "But as a matter of fact," said the glorifier of the commonplace with a smile, "we are walking through diamonds and sapphires and opals." His friend looked astonished and Ruskin continued, "This soot, you know, is a distant cousin to diamonds; and this clay, this sand, to those finished products we call jewels. There really is nothing common or unclean in this world of ours, my young friend, and it is what we call 'commonest' that we often find most worth while, if only we have the patience or will to take the pains to develop it."

If we could only see the relation of the common things of life, the so-called commonplace traits of character, to the ideal of the Divine Mind that planned the whole, even as Ruskin

saw the kinship of the soot to the diamond, how it would transform and glorify our lives! It would stimulate the most sluggish; would put new heart into the most discouraged; would unfold such a vista of possibilities to the humblest worker in the army of humanity, that each would be irresistibly urged onward to the achievement of the greatest thing possible to him.

Scientists tell us that the reason why the secrets of Nature have been hidden from the world so long is because we are not simple enough in our methods of reasoning; that investigators are looking for unusual phenomena, for something complicated; that the principles of Nature's secrets are so extremely simple that men overlook them.

The happiness and success that life holds for every normal being are never found by multitudes of men and women because they think that the methods by which they are attained are very difficult and intricate. They believe that they are only for those who have been born in the ranks of the fortunate, the well-to-do, or who have been especially gifted by Nature with genius or commanding ability or talents of some sort.

How few of us realize that true success, which is open to all, is not measured by the accomplishment of some great thing; that it does not consist in being wealthy, famous, or powerful; but that it is the crown of all who honestly, earnestly do their best and live the everyday simple life, with all that it involves in the practice of the commonplace duties of every day. It is by the exercise of the common, homely virtues; it is by trying to do everything one attempts to a complete finish; by trying to be scrupulously honest in every transaction; by always ringing true in our friendships, even by holding a helpful, accommodating attitude toward those about us; by trying to fulfill to the best of our ability the obligation to be noble, to be loyal to our highest ideals, it is by such things as these that we make successful lives.

If every human being could once get a good view of himself, could see clearly his latent possibilities, and should then apply himself to their cultivation, civilization would push toward the millennium with giant strides.

Many people get the impression that success consists in doing some marvelous thing,



that there must be some genius born in the man who achieves it; that otherwise it would not be possible to him. The youthful mind throws a halo around the successful character; invests it with the superhuman attributes which common mortals do not possess. It is almost impossible to convince the average boy that his hero is not a superman, a sort of demi-god, endowed with divine possibilities so far above his own that it would be useless for him to try to imitate him.

How often in trying to arouse the ambition of young people have I been met with the objection, "Oh, but I am not a genius, I have only just common, ordinary ability," or "If I only had the genius of a Wanamaker, a Roosevelt, or a Lincoln, I might accomplish something. But I am merely an ordinary boy, and not very quick to learn. I have only an ordinary education, and never expect to fill a big place in the world."

As a matter of fact, the majority of those who have accomplished things that have blessed mankind have not been ranked among the geniuses. George Stevenson, for example, was not a genius and could not even read

or write at twenty, but the old bridge that stands at Newcastle is a monument to ordinary ability with extraordinary application.

John Harvard was a youth of no promise, but Harvard University, which he founded, has been and continues to be one of the greatest builders of American civilization.

The class leader of the Ohio school, where Grant failed to distinguish himself, was running a forty-acre farm close to the same old schoolhouse when Grant was a tenant of the White House.

Who could ever estimate the achievement of the "dull boys" and the "dunces"!

Dr. Chalmers, the great Scottish divine, was once expelled from St. Andrew's School for stupidity, though he became, later, extraordinarily proficient in mathematics.

Another great preacher, Henry Ward Beecher, was in his youth classed with the dunces. "Henry Ward," says Mrs. Stowe, his famous sister, "was not marked out by the prophecies of partial friends for any brilliant future. He had precisely the organization which often passes for dullness in early boyhood. He had great deficiency in verbal mem-

ory, a deficiency which marked him through life; he was excessively sensitive to praise and blame, extremely diffident, and with a power of yearning, undeveloped emotion, which he neither understood nor could express. This bashful, dazed-looking boy pattered barefoot to and from the little, unpainted schoolhouse, with a brown towel or a blue-checked apron to hem during the intervals between his spelling and reading lessons. Nobody thought much of his future, further than to see that he was safe and healthy, or even troubled themselves to inquire what might be going on in his life."

Not long before his death, Professor William James of Harvard wrote a notable magazine article, the gist of which was that men should use more of the vast store of energy which they actually possess; that they should break away from the "habit of inferiority." This article was copied far and wide, indicating that men were eager for the message it brought—essentially a message of hope—the message of democracy, the call to the average man and woman to go up higher. The opportunity to do so is here, for those who are ready to grasp it, who are as eager to work out of the



slough of inferiority as they are to hear the inspired message.

The great majority of people who have done things that have benefited the world were not geniuses but men and women who developed their average ability and cultivated their ordinary talents to their fullest capacity. The great trouble with "genius" is, that it is often accompanied by some defeating weakness, such as a lack of common sense, of good judgment, of initiative. In other words, what is called genius is often mere brilliancy resulting from onesided development, an over-stimulation of one or more faculties, which is inevitably paid for by an under-development or a fatal deficiency somewhere else.

Carlyle defined genius as "an infinite capacity for taking pains." The difficulty for many of us is that we are not willing to take any pains at all. We are too lazy to get right down to hard work. We are not willing to put ourselves under the same severe training for our lifework as those great souls who made the most of the stuff that was in them, and gave their best to the service of mankind, thus developing characters that will be an inspiration

to all who come after them. We expect somebody to boost us, to save us all the painful labor of self-development. It is only now and then that even the most ambitious youth is willing to pay the price in downright hard work, in stern training for the fullness of that success which is not measured by the size of a bank account or the honors of high office, but by character, self-enlargement, and service to society.

The truth is, and it is the most encouraging truth that can be impressed upon the mind of youth, that "What man has done man can do,"—if he is willing to pay the price. Men of great achievements are not to be set on pedestals and revered as exceptions to the average of humanity.

Success that is possible to the average human being is made up of very common ingredients. It is the sum total of the exercise of the plain, ordinary virtues and talents,—of sound judgment, of honesty of purpose and persistent industry.

If we analyze the success of most men we shall find that it is the fruit of the extraordinary application of those modest everyday qualities which all well-balanced people pos-

ness in greater or less degree, and the application of sound judgment, of common sense to all the affairs of life.

A writer recently analyzing the character and career of Theodore Roosevelt insists that his qualifications are indeed by no means above or different from the average; that this man of varied and extraordinary accomplishments is made of the most ordinary and commonplace material, and that he is an object lesson as to what any average human being may be or do, if he be energized to the "nth" degree.

As a student at Harvard University, his critic points out that young Roosevelt took no prizes either in scholarship or in sports; that he has never been a good shot himself, confessing that his eyes are weak and his hand "not very steady," and yet, by practice and perseverance, he says he has killed every kind of game. As a reformer, he continues, Mr. Roosevelt accomplished some good, though his heart never flamed with the fire of a Savonarola or a Wendell Phillips. He was a gallant soldier, but did not display any military genius. In short, this writer sums up that Theodore Roosevelt may be said to be an ex-



ample—an example of such peculiar interest as to be indeed an inspiration—of what ordinary capabilities can do when they are applied unceasingly, intensely, and with their full energy to the work nearest at hand.

Ex-President Roosevelt himself once answered in this wise a man who had expressed admiration for his successful career: “It has always seemed to me that in life there are two ways of achieving success, or for that matter, of achieving what is commonly called greatness. One is to do that which can be done only by the man of exceptional and extraordinary abilities—and this, of course, means that only one man can do it, and it is a very rare kind of success or greatness. The other is to do that which many men *could* do, but which, as a matter of fact, very few of them actually do. This is the ordinary kind of greatness.”

Colonel Roosevelt says of himself, “I am not a genius. The things I talk about are not new but the principles of right and wrong.” He is always preaching the exercise of the plain, ordinary virtues,—common sense, common honesty, truthfulness, thoroughness, honesty, straightforwardness, square dealing,—and yet

it is a fact that in American history few men's words have carried more weight or have met wider or more instant response.

Colonel Roosevelt is a good illustration of the splendid possibilities of the intensification of common ordinary every day qualities and of extraordinary application.

Before Lincoln went to New York to deliver his great speech at Cooper Union he was very much troubled because he thought he would be seriously embarrassed by the presence of many much talked about public men. He had traveled but very little and he, like many young men, exaggerated the greatness and importance of men who were in the public eye; but after his return these giants who had previously loomed up so big in his imagination shrank very materially. He had found that he was able to hold his own with men whom he had supposed to be infinitely greater than himself.

The fact is that men who are at the front in the world's affairs are always very greatly overestimated by others, especially by young men, who have a great admiration for those who have done things which they have never attempted.

Lincoln has been the hero probably of more American boys during the last two generations than any other American character. A great many look upon him as a genius, a marvelous being, raised up for the accomplishment of a divine purpose. Yet, if we study his character, we find it made up of the humblest virtues, the most ordinary qualities, but highly intensified; just those possessed by the poorest boys and girls, who look upon him as a demigod. His great career and marvelous achievements represent the triumph of dead-in-earnestness, consecrated, persistent work in raising such talent and ability as he possessed to their highest power.

In analyzing Lincoln's greatness I am sure most young people would expect to find some brilliant commanding qualities which would rank with genius, but really his greatest characteristics were his industry, his thoroughness, his unselfishness of motive, his simple kindness of heart, his integrity of purpose, his transparency of character, his persistence, his passion for justice and fairness, for self-enlargement, his aspiration, his yearning for wholeness of life. These were really his most



characteristic attributes, and they can be developed by the poorest boy and girl.

It was his ambition and the use he made of all the simple ingredients of his character that raised him head and shoulders above the average, that made him a towering figure in history. He did not seek fame; he did not aspire to office for the love of power. His ambition from the start was simply to make the most of himself. He wanted to know something, to be somebody, to lift his head above his humble environment and be of some service to the world. His highest aspiration was to do good, to be in the largest and fullest sense of the word a great man, a man after the pattern of the Christ, the Son of God.

Edwin A. Abbey, the great artist, was a remarkable example of indefatigable industry and conscientiousness, rather than of genius.

Abbey was not a supreme master in his art, but he always struggled to put his ideals on canvas and held his artistic ability above any mere money consideration. In his early days when he was making black and white illustrations for Harper Brothers his friends told him he could accomplish more by not taking such

infinite pains with everything he did, but he could not be persuaded to cheapen the quality of his work. He never did less than his best, and often destroyed pictures which did not come up to his ideal of what his work should be. He would not take the chance of injuring not only his reputation but the quality of his conscience by selling a picture which did not represent the best of which he was capable.

Mr. Abbey left a name which will live, but his fame is largely the result of a life of hard work. His remarkable success was due to the triumph of the common virtues and the raising of his ability to its highest power.

Most of us are not willing to be honest with ourselves. We are looking for short cuts. We are trying to slide into success on some patent scheme or other, something which will clip the corners, shorten the road, and relieve the tediousness of the toilsome journey. We want to arrive at the goal, but we want to travel in a parlor car. When we cannot do this we blame luck, or fate, or hard circumstances for our remaining tied to the "habit of inferiority." Instead of buckling down to hard work and persistent application we spend

our time longing for some indefinite, mysterious power to help us to do the thing we want to do, while we neglect to cultivate the very gifts which would enable us to reach our goal. We are not willing to stoop to use the means and opportunities already at hand. We don't use our eyes, we don't use our common sense, or we would realize that it is not the sky rocket genius, but the doggedly plodding average man or woman, the one "who never lets go," who succeeds.

It seems incredible that so large a proportion of the human race should still labor under the delusion that some mysterious power, luck or chance, a fortune left by some one's death, or help from some outside source, is necessary to enable them to succeed in their undertaking, when on every hand are splendid examples of exactly the contrary.

Daniel Webster, for instance, had no remarkable traits of character in his boyhood. He was sent to Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire, and was there only a short time when a neighbor found him crying on his way home and asked the reason. Daniel said he despaired of ever making a scholar; that the



boys made fun of him for always being at the foot of the class, and that he had decided to give up and go home. The friend urged him to go back, to try once more, and see what hard study would do. He went back, applied himself to his studies with determination to win, and it was not long before he silenced those who had ridiculed him, by reaching the head of the class, and remaining there.

Yet every little while I get letters from young men who say, if they were positively sure that they could be a Webster in law, they would devote all their energies to study, fling their whole lives into their work; or if they could be an Edison in invention, or a merchant prince like John Wanamaker, they could work with enthusiasm and zeal, with power and concentration. They would be willing to make any sacrifice, to undergo any hardship in order to achieve what these men have achieved. But they feel that they lack the marvelous ability, the tremendous talent, in short, the genius that made these men leaders in their different fields.

The majority of us are so constituted that we cannot understand and are dazzled by the ability that does something that we have not

done, and we naturally over-estimate it. But if young men and women, instead of keeping their eyes too constantly on those who have gotten up a little further in the world than they have, would take an inventory of themselves and develop their own resources, they would be surprised to find that they have ability even superior probably to that of those to whom they are in the habit of looking up with such reverence and admiration.

I have no doubt that there are clerks in Marshall Field's or John Wanamaker's establishments to-day who have sufficient native ability, if they could only discover and make use of it, to be proprietors of successful establishments themselves instead of plodding along year after year as employees. There are many people plugging away in inferior positions who have enough talent to make their mark and rise above inferiority, who either have no faith in themselves, or are not willing to make sacrifices to attain their ambition.

On the other hand, there is too much straining after the big things of life, too much struggling for the so-called success that means mere piling up money, or achieving notoriety.

How often we see people in the country trampling down the daisies, the beautiful violets, and other lovely wild flowers, in their efforts to get a branch of showy flowers off a large tree, which, perhaps, would not compare in beauty and delicacy and loveliness with the things they crush under their feet in trying to procure it. In the same way many people disregard the exercise of the common virtues in their effort to accomplish some unique and extraordinary thing, and thus lose the happiness and success easily within their reach.

I know a man whose name or face has never appeared even in a country paper, who is not known outside of his own little village and who supports his family by his daily work, yet he is a true success. Though he earns but a small salary he manages not only to maintain a comfortable home for his wife and children, but also to save a little something each year. He thinks more of making his family and those about him happy than of making a fortune or of achieving fame. He takes a great pride in bringing his children up to be self-supporting, thrifty, industrious, and good citizens. He impresses upon them that the best investment



they can ever make is in themselves, in self-improvement, in fitting themselves to be useful members of society. His ambition for them is not that they shall be rich or famous, but that they shall lead simple, upright lives and do their duty; that they shall always be brave and fearless in standing for the truth, for right and justice, and that they shall never shirk their part in the world's work. This man is a hard worker, but he is happy in his work, and his greatest pleasure, when the day is done, is to get home to his wife and children, and to the enjoyment of his small, but excellent library of choice books, which he prizes far more than gold. He is highly esteemed in his community and his opinion carries great weight with all who know him because of his absolute honesty and reliability in all matters, whether private or public. He is loved by his associates because he is always ready to lend a helping hand, always kind and considerate to others. He never gossips or criticises his neighbors. In short, he is a manly man, always true to his best self, and never says or does anything that is not open and aboveboard. If he is not a success then there is no meaning in the word.

There is no community in which one cannot find men and women of this stamp, whose cultivation of the common virtues has shown how simple a matter it is after all to gain the best things in life.

Speaking of his success as an athlete and sportsman, Mr. Roosevelt once said: "Any hardy, healthy man, fond of out-door life, but not in the least an athlete, could lead the life I have led if he chose—and by choosing I, of course, mean choosing to exercise the requisite industry, judgment, and foresight, none of a very marked type."

Choose what you will, within the limits of reason, and by the exercise of the average ability you possess, you will in time reach your mark.

The trouble is we lay too great stress upon making some supreme effort instead of bearing upon the seemingly commonplace, the ordinary elements of character which contribute to an all-round success in life.

In straining for effect, in the struggle to do something great and wonderful, we often overlook the supreme importance of the common virtues and so miss the little successes, the sum

of which would have made our lives sublime. And after all this straining and struggling for the larger, the more showy things, how many, at the last discover to their horror what they have missed on the way up, what sweetness, what beauty, what loveliness, what true success they have lost in the struggle for the false.

In the last analysis, there is no secret in the greatest of all successes, the building of a noble character. It is achieved quietly, without noise or straining, by the natural exercise of the commonest, most everyday qualities.



## CHAPTER V

### KEEPING AT IT AS A MIRACLE WORKER

“Now, you will acknowledge I can beat you running, won’t you?” said a man to a plucky old Dutchman whom he had beaten twelve times in succession in foot-racing. “No, sir,” was the reply, “I never acknowledge that I’m beat, for, by chimminey, I never gives up!”

The way to develop a strong masterful character is to persist to a complete finish in whatever one undertakes. The art of holding on, of sticking, hanging, never giving up, no matter how great the discouragement, or how dark the outlook, is an indispensable success quality.

The bulldog is the most dreaded of all dogs because when he gets a grip on anything it is almost impossible to choke him off. Even the bull pup shows this characteristic. It is astonishing how much men and women can accomplish by sheer persistence, by that bulldog tenacity which never gives up.

Success is not in favorable conditions, not in circumstances, not in influence, not in the capital that comes from others, but right inside of ourselves, in the persistency and tenacity of purpose that enables us to hold on in spite of all opposition and discouragement. This sort of bulldog tenacity should be encouraged in the young until it crystallizes into a fixed habit.

There is no other human quality more universally admired than fixity of purpose, the grim determination which never flinches, never shows the white feather, never turns back, but pushes steadfastly ahead when others give up, grips the tighter when others let go. A man that never flinches is everywhere in demand. No matter how many others are out of employment there is always an advertisement out at the door of every line of human endeavor for the man that can stick and hang, that persists to the end.

Unflinching persistency never goes alone; it is always accompanied by other qualities of the same family, the achievement family, the family of winners.

The men who accomplish things worth while may have many weaknesses and deficiencies,

many objectionable characteristics, but they have also characteristic good qualities, which are always present. Achievers are not only persistent, they are also hard workers and believers in themselves.

Most of us overestimate the value of capital and influence, the pull that comes from others, and we greatly underestimate our own inherent strength. Young people do not half realize what a tremendous power lies in plain grit, in just sticking and hanging until victory comes.

In one of our great cities some time ago I saw this sign over a bank which had failed several times and started again, "Everything has happened to this bank which could happen to it."

Grit is what is left in a man after everything has happened to him that can happen to a human being and still leave him alive. You can measure a man's grit by what he does after he fails; after everybody about him has given up, and turned back. Grit will stick and hang; it will persist when every other mental quality has left the field.

Keeping on, keeping on, strengthens the will and keeps up the courage. When we quit because things go hard our courage disappears



and our will weakens. No matter whether you can see light ahead or not, no matter how dark the outlook, just stick and hang. This will keep your courage and your self-confidence intact, and the way eventually will clear up. There is a tremendous creative force in just standing up and holding on with your face ever towards your goal, even if at times you cannot move forward a single inch, or at the best only a step at a time.

A prominent Chicago man was once in the bottom of a mine when the hoisting apparatus broke. He found himself six hundred feet underground with no way of escape except by a ladder. After climbing three hundred feet to a landing he could only see a little opening at the top, which did not appear larger than a penny, and it did not seem possible he could ever reach it. But he said to himself, "I only have to take one step at a time, and to keep on." And he kept on, taking the steps slowly, one by one, until finally he reached the surface.

The trouble with most of us is that we are discouraged by the long distance to the light,—between us and the goal,—and we get impatient because we cannot go by leaps and bounds.

I have talked with a great many men, "down and outers," who, in going over their past experiences, have almost invariably said: "How I wish I had kept on as I began!" But they thought they were not getting on fast enough, so they became discouraged and turned back. They quit their first enterprise and then took the wrong turning.

"Turn-backers," "quitters," never get anywhere or accomplish anything of note. They are constantly starting in at new things, and so their lives are scrappy, filled with half-finished tasks. They go a little way into many things, but turn back when they strike thorns. They never go far enough to get the flowers, the pleasant things in an occupation, which come from long training and that superb facility and ease which are the results of experience. They do the hardest work, the breaking in, and then give up without even tasting the harvest of the seed they sowed.

It is said that many a persistent pearl diver, after others have become discouraged and given up, has fetched up a valuable pearl that was waiting for just one more plunge. It is the persistent soul that wins the great life prizes in every line of endeavor.

Take out of the patent office in Washington the triumphs of persistency of clear grit; take out the results of bulldog tenacity of purpose and there will be comparatively few patents left. We should have no ocean cable, no telegraph, no telephone, no wireless telegraphy, no sewing machine, no automobile, no flying machine, no air brake, no great ocean liners; in fact, we would have a very primitive civilization with few comforts or luxuries. But for perseverance and grit we would still be traveling in stage coaches or voyaging in sailing ships. Perseverance and grit are responsible for about all the things that make life worth living.

Not long ago I asked a man if he were college bred. "No," he said, "that is a very sore spot with me. I quit during the first part of my freshman year, because I became discouraged and homesick. I have blamed myself for this ever since. If I had only kept on I should have been some success to-day."

Lack of sand in his youth cost this man perhaps a brilliant career, blighted his chance at the outset and spoiled his future.

There are multitudes of men in this country



to-day who have been mortified, and tremendously handicapped in their careers because, like this man, when youths they quit school or college under the stress of discouragement or homesickness, and never returned. If they had waited just a little longer until they became a little better acquainted with their companions and their environment, a little more interested in their studies, nothing could have induced them to quit.

How many youths have left medical and law schools, have given up learning a trade, when they were depressed by the strangeness and apparent coldness of their new situation, when the way ahead looked very difficult and forbidding to them! Many a boy with a genius for the thing he attempted has given it up under discouraging conditions and regretted it ever after.

It is a dangerous thing to quit under temporary discouragement. No one is in a condition to know what is best and right to do when he is discouraged. Then the mind is warped, the judgment is twisted, one does not see the situation clearly; his perspective is at fault.

There are multitudes of failures in the world to-day who might have been great successes if they had simply had the nerve, the stamina, and the grit to hold on.

Keeping at it as a life rule has performed more miracles in the world's history than brilliant talents or genius. Keeping at it has made multitudes of well-educated men out of ignorant ones. Keeping at it has made most of the great fortunes in existence. Keeping at it has ever accomplished the impossible.

When Columbus's mutinous sailors refused to go any further and threatened to put their leader in chains he never flinched or wavered but kept pressing on. Calling the mutinous crew he reasoned with them, and tried to re-charge them with courage, hope, and enthusiasm. "But Admiral," asked one, "what shall we do when our hope is gone?" "Sail on, sail on, sail on and on," was the dauntless reply of one of the most persistent, courageous souls that ever sailed the seas.

A person with comparatively little ability can begin things, can even carry them along while everything goes easily; but the test of

character is the power to hold on, to sail on, and to keep sailing on, when everybody else has turned back, aye, even when hope itself is well-nigh gone.

Can you hold on when you have reached the point which would mean failure to most men? If you can, like Columbus, you are bound to reach your goal. We cannot tell much about what is in a man until he has reached the point where the majority of people would stop. Then, if he persists, hangs on and refuses to give up, we know he has the triumphant quality.

A pretty good classification of men could be made by grading them by the distance from their goal at which they give up or lie down. Some fall out of the race almost at the start, others keep on a little further, and multitudes stop just this side of victory,—many of them almost in sight of their goal.

It is a rare man who, like Grant and Napoleon, has no surrender in his blood, who never recognizes defeat, who sees hope where others see despair, victory where others see disaster.

One of the earliest signs that a youth is made of the stuff that wins is his propensity to stick,



to hang on. He persists. This is a sort of forerunner of talent, a predictor of success. No matter how many other good qualities you may have if you cannot stick you will not win out.

I am never very anxious about a youth's future when I find that he has sticking talent, that he can persist. Pure grit is that element of character which enables a man to clutch his aim with an iron grip, and keep the needle of his purpose pointing to the polar star of his hope. Through sunshine and storm, through hurricane and tempest, through sleet and rain, with a leaky ship, with a mutinous crew, it persists; in fact, nothing but death can stop it or subdue it, and it dies still struggling.

How long and how hard can you stick to one thing? Your success in life will depend largely on this. I have in mind a versatile man who manifests remarkable sticking qualities for anything that is new, but the moment the thing becomes a little old and familiar it stales for him, he loses his adhesiveness and falls off.

Remember, every time you harbor doubt of your ability to do what you undertake, every time you turn yourself over to fear of failure,

you are weakening by just so much your stamina, your grit, your initiative, your ability to stick and hang.

Cling to your vision no matter what others may say or do. Keep your eye fixed on your goal. Don't swerve to the right or to the left though a Paradise tempt you. No matter what bids you turn aside, or tempts you to change your course, keep on the straight path to your destination. The soft character, the easy-going man, who is afraid of criticism, denunciation, and who is always wondering what people think of him, is not made of the stuff that wins. He has not the sand which keeps him going straight on to his goal.

What would become of a sea captain who whenever he saw a fog settling down on the waters, or a storm coming up, would turn his ship around and sail back to the port he had left? You know he would lose his job and be branded as an incompetent and a coward. Every sea captain keeps his ship true to the compass and he plows through fogs, storms or hurricanes to his distant goal. You are the captain of your life ship, and it is up to you to bring it into port grandly. If you haven't the

qualities of a good sea captain your ship is in danger.

Downright hard work, a purpose which never flags, a grit and nerve which never retreat; these are the qualities that make life victorious.

"I do not remember a book in all the departments of learning," said Beecher, "nor a scrap of literature, nor a work in all the schools of art from which its author derived a permanent renown that is not known to have been long and patiently elaborated."

It was years of persistent labor involving the reading of a thousand volumes that enabled George Eliot to write "Daniel Deronda," for which she got \$50,000. Schiller "could never get done," and Balzac, the great French novelist, sometimes worked a week on a single page.

Don't get discouraged; don't give up and lie down; you may be almost within sight of your goal. Your pearl may be waiting but one more plunge.

When Grant was at Shiloh he thought he was going to fail, but he kept right on. It was just this keeping right on which made him one



of the greatest military figures of his age. After his defeat at Shiloh nearly every newspaper in the United States demanded his removal. Lincoln's friends pleaded with him to give the command to some one else; but to all appeals Lincoln replied, "I can't spare this man. He fights. He's got the grip of a bulldog, and when he once gets his teeth in, nothing can shake him off." His was the kind of grit that makes a way if it cannot find one.

The world makes way for dogged persistence because there is nothing else to do. Think of trying to influence Bismarck in the prime of his power to release his grip upon the thing he was determined to put through! Think of trying to discourage Napoleon from taking his army across the Alps in winter! He never planned a great campaign which his advisers did not try to have him give up as impossible, but the impossibilities to an ordinary man were not impossibilities to Napoleon. He laughed at such obstructions. How many of Washington's friends begged him to save himself at Valley Forge and to give up campaigns which threatened his life! They told him that his life was worth too much to sacrifice, even in such a cause.

Young people continually prate of genius. They seem to think that every person who does a great thing in the world must be a genius, a man with superb talent, but, as a matter of fact, the greater number of men who have made history were men of ordinary talents, but with very extraordinary application, great industry, men with common ability, but with mighty uncommon persistence, determination and clear grit.

## CHAPTER VI

### MASTERFULNESS AND PHYSICAL VIGOR

THE great problem in manufacturing is to get the largest possible results with the least possible expenditure and the least wear and tear of machinery. The great problem with men in every business is how to get the maximum income with the minimum outlay. Yet many of these men who are so shrewd and economical in their business expenditure pay very little attention to the economy of their personal power expenditure.

There are thousands of people in every field of life whose careers are most disappointing, simply because they do not keep themselves in a physical and mental condition to do their best thing, the highest thing possible to them.

I know men of middle age who are practically where they were when they left school or college. Their enthusiasm has long since petered out; their work has become drudgery



because they have not vim enough to make it interesting. Their lack of physical vigor makes life a grind instead of a joy. Instead of advancing some of them have even retrograded.

Everywhere we see men and women plodding along in mediocrity, capable of great things but doing little things, because they have not enough vitality to push their way and overcome the obstacles in their path.

The author does not get hold of the reader because of his stale brain, because he has no vigor, no surplus vitality, to put into his book. It is wishy-washy, it does not arouse or stimulate, because the writer was not aroused when writing. His work lacks vitality and virility because he could not put into it that which was not in himself.

The clergyman does not get hold of his people because he lacks the force of physical vigor. He is a weakling mentally because he is a weakling physically. The teacher does not enthuse or inspire his pupil because he himself lacks life and enthusiasm. His brain and nerves are fagged, his strength is depleted, because he is overworked or has not taken proper care of his health.

It is pitiful to see these devitalized people in every profession and occupation plodding along without spontaneity, buoyancy or enthusiasm in their endeavor. They try to whip themselves to increased effort but they are not physically equal to it.

Many think that all great achievement depends upon unceasing industry; that, if they keep everlastingly at it, if they are always at work, their accomplishment will be greater than if they work less and play more. There could not be a greater mistake. What we achieve depends upon the effectiveness of our work. The brain will not give up its best energy under pressure or strain. Its work must be voluntary. It does its best easily, spontaneously. It cannot be forced to its highest production, and it can work to advantage only when in perfect condition.

I know people who force their brains with stimulants when they are in no condition to be crowded, and this always results in deteriorated mental product. Clear, strong thinking springs from freshness and enthusiasm, and these qualities are not produced by strenuous, driving methods.

At the time of the extensive change from nine to eight hours, most business men were alarmed at the shortening of the day's work. They said it would entail an absolute loss of one-ninth of the product of every employee's labor.

Results show that there has been no such loss. On the contrary, not only has there been no reduction in quantity but, because the employees are fresher, have more physical vigor, and hence work with greater enthusiasm, the quality of their work is also improved. Their energy does not flag toward the end of the day; they work with more zest, more spontaneity, more courage, and greater hope. They are not so anxious to kill time, and their additional hour of leisure gives them greater reserve force for the next day's work.

There is no greater delusion than that we can accomplish more by working a great many hours each day, straining mind and body to the limit of endurance, than by working fewer hours with less straining, less fatigue, but with greater freshness and intensity.

First-class work is impossible to brains exhausted by lack of recreation and sleep. Even



the will of a Napoleon could not make thoroughly efficient a brain fed by poisoned, vitiated blood; for when the blood, the brain cells, and the nerve cells are thus loaded with fatigue poison the sensibilities are deadened and the perceptions dulled. Mental apathy follows, with lowered ambition and degenerated ideals.

Most men living on this continent not only use up every day every ounce, every particle of energy their systems generate, but also draw upon their reserve power, and not infrequently the result is mental bankruptcy. They begin their day's work in about the predicament of a man who starts on a journey every morning with a horse which has not been properly fed and has not had time to rest.

Take an ordinary work horse, never groom him, keep him in a close, dark stall, only half feed him, and at any time it is convenient for you, and it will be only a little while before that horse's working and selling value will be cut down one-half. If you treat yourself relatively in about the same way you cannot expect to fare any better.

When the Rev. Dr. Bellamy's students used to consult him about how to succeed in the pul-

pit, he would invariably say: "Fill up the cask, man, fill up the cask." It is impossible to continue drawing water out of a cask without keeping water running into it. Yet many people seem to think that without replenishing their vitality by nourishing food, proper sleep and recreation, and regular living, they should accomplish as much as if they obeyed all the laws of good health. They do not realize that system in living is infinitely more important than system in business, since health is fundamental to success in business, or any other form of success.

While there are isolated examples of people who have succeeded in spite of ill health, we all know that for the average man or woman achievement of a high quality without the physical basis of health is impossible.

It is every one's sacred duty to keep himself up to the highest possible standard, physically and mentally, otherwise he cannot deliver to the world the divine message entrusted to him by his Creator. It is a positive sin to keep oneself in a depleted, run-down, exhausted state, so that he cannot answer his life call.

To be confronted by a great opportunity of which you are powerless to take advantage, because you have let your energy leak away in useless, vicious ways, or to feel that you can only take hold of your great chance tremblingly, weakly, with doubt instead of assurance and a consciousness of vigor, is one of the most disheartening experiences that can ever come to a human being.

If you would make the most of yourself, cut away all of your vitality sappers, get rid of everything which hampers and holds you back, everything which wastes your energy, cuts down your working capital. Get freedom for full self-expression at any cost. Do not drag about with you a body that is half dead through vicious habits, which sap your vitality and drain off your life forces. Do not do anything or touch anything which will lower your vitality or lessen your chances of advancement. Always ask yourself, "What is there in this thing I am going to do which will add to my life-work, increase my power, keep me in superb condition to do the best thing possible to me?"

If we used common sense in our diet, lived a plain, sane, simple life, with plenty of play



and exercise in the open air, we should seldom need medicine. But the way many of us live is a crime against nature, against manhood, against womanhood, against our possibilities.

Men are constantly violating the laws of health, eating all sorts of incompatible, indigestible foods, often when the stomach is exhausted and unable to take care of simple food. They fill it with a great variety of rich, indigestible stuffs, retard the digestive processes with harmful drinks, then wonder why they are unfit for work, and resort to all sorts of stimulants to overcome the bad effects of their greediness and foolishness. Many go to the other extreme and do not take enough food or get enough variety in what they do eat.

The result is that while there is a great overplus of certain elements in some parts of the system, there is a famine of different kinds of elements in other parts of the system. This tends to create abnormal appetites that often lead to drinking or other dissipation. Many people resort to dangerous drugs in their effort to satisfy the craving of the starved cells in the various tissues when what they really need is proper food.

Most of us are at war with ourselves. We are our own worst enemies. We expect a great deal of ourselves, yet we do not put ourselves in a condition to achieve what we expect. We are either too indulgent to our bodies or we are not indulgent enough. We pamper or we neglect them, and it would be hard to tell which mode of treatment produces the worst results. Few people treat their bodies with the same wise care and consideration that they bestow upon a valuable piece of machinery or property of any kind from which they expect large returns.

There is nothing which pays greater dividends than self-investment; keeping oneself up to standard by buttressing the health in every possible way and using the utmost care and exactitude in regimen, in work habits, and in life habits. In order to maintain a normal standard of health it is often the best kind of economy to quit work and spend considerable time in recreation, in play and rest.

A locomotive must not only be fed with the right quality of fuel and the proper quantity, but it must also be allowed intervals of rest or it will not do its appointed work. If it

does not have an opportunity periodically to allow its particles of iron and steel to readjust themselves it will finally give out. If cohesion in the engine tends to lose its grip upon its metal molecules and atoms when in constant use, so that it must stand in the roundhouse occasionally and have a chance to readjust itself; if iron and steel cannot stand the strain of perpetual use, is it strange that the human brain must have frequent opportunities to readjust itself after the strain and stress of strenuous activity?

In order to be well-balanced, self-poised and broad-minded, one must have a great variety of experience; and for this play is just as necessary as work. He who is everlastingly working, who never gets time to play, to see his friends, to travel, or to go into the country, because he thinks time is too precious, that he must utilize every minute in practical work, is defeating the very purpose which he is trying to attain.

There must be spontaneity, buoyancy, elasticity, and vivacity in the highest activities, and every one who wishes to get the maximum of achievement out of life should know all Na-



ture's methods of rejuvenation. What a jaded mind requires is not so much absolute rest as freshness of view. For instance, your mind, which you have been forcing to do things by sheer will power, is fagged or even completely exhausted; go out in the country, where an entirely new set of faculties will come into play, and you will feel rested immediately. You may be just as active as you were before, but in a different way; for you are using faculties which are fresh and eager for exercise, while those which were jaded from being driven are resting. New surroundings and activities have brought into action a new set of brain cells, while those which were exhausted, surcharged with the poison of fatigue, have a chance to renew themselves.

I dare say that every one has, at some time, gone home from work weary, with brain fagged or muscles exhausted, discouraged, "blue" and irritable, when instead of sitting or lying down he has played away these distressing feelings and felt refreshed after a good romp with the children or the dog, or after passing a delightful evening with an old schoolmate or chum of his boyhood whom he has not seen for many a year.

This shows that it is not negative rest so much as change that we need after our day's work,—change of conditions, change of activities; the bringing into play of a new set of faculties which have been lying dormant during the daily strain.

The fun-loving or play faculties are generally regarded as not very essential to character or success, but we find that many in whom those faculties are atrophied from lack of use are either failures or cranks.

There are certain of our faculties whose chief function seems to be to lubricate all the others and to keep the human machinery in perfect order. We do not use them directly in making a living, but indirectly they are of untold value. Bringing the social and humorous faculties into play, exercising the affections and indulging the love of fun, play an important part in restoring and preserving both mental and physical equilibrium. For example, we often see a great, tired, jaded crowd of people witnessing some funny play, and when it is over they are not more tired, as we might have expected—for it is very hard work to sit still in a close, stuffy theater for

three hours,—but completely transformed and refreshed,—everybody smiling and happy.

Music, too, has a magic charm to put in tune the human instrument. It is a powerful tonic for many minds. Others are refreshed by reading certain books. I know people who are very much rested, no matter how tired they may have been before, by reading the invigorating thoughts of Emerson or of other uplifting, inspiring writers.

Wholesome play, clean, healthy fun is a constant lubricator, a mental refreshener, a renewer, a rejuvenator. You must mix it with your work, or both yourself and your work will suffer.

It is the monotony of their work which makes many business and professional men age so rapidly. There is not enough variety in their lives. They do the same thing year in and year out, with very little change. The result is a one-sided development, with over-stimulation and exercise of some faculties and atrophy of others.

There is nothing truer than that “All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.” He who is always grinding, who never relaxes, will ul-



timately become a nervous wreck, or else he will grow dull, stupid, and narrow. His social faculties will die, and finally he will not be able to enjoy anything outside of the mechanical routine of his business. Neither will anybody enjoy his society.

Man was not made to be a business or professional machine. To fulfill the object of his being, he must be an all-round, fully developed character.

One ought so to live, work and play that he will be at the top of his condition every day in the year. You will accomplish much more than you ever dreamed you could if you can *keep yourself perpetually in an after-vacation condition*; and you can do this by the right use of your physical and mental forces. I know people who have so disciplined themselves in mental and physical rejuvenation through the exercise of their thought that they can throw off that "tired feeling" in a very few minutes by inviting and entertaining thoughts which invigorate, renew and refresh—harmonious thoughts, which antidote all discord.

Our mental attitude has everything to do with our feeling exhausted or fresh. Discour-

agement is a great exhauster of energy. It poisons the blood and the brain cells. I have known a fit of the blues, lasting two or three days, to exhaust its victims more than would a month's work, because it kept the entire system depleted by chemically poisoning the blood; and the poison could not be eliminated until the mental attitude was changed. On the other hand, it is your reserve gathered during sleep and recreation that gives buoyancy of mind, spring and spontaneity to your intellect, freshness, force and sprightliness to all your mental processes. It is this reserve that gives your mentality poise, just as it is the reserve of tremendous weight in the balance wheel which forces steel fingers through the steel plates without a quiver or jar in the machinery. Your mental and physical reserve is your balance wheel, which enables you to perform such miracles as men sometimes do in great emergencies, in great business or professional stress, without shattering their constitutions.

Personal power is the aim of every sane ambition. We may not think about it in just that way, but whether we are bending our

energies to make money or to write books, to paint pictures or to make machines, to win a position in the professional ranks or to build up a big business, to make a fortune or to serve society, whatever our immediate ambition, our real aim is to do more and to be more. Increase of ability, increase of strength, increase of power to accomplish our aim is what we are all after. There is no way of gaining this increase so effectively as the doing of everything that will perfect and preserve our health.

Whatever else you do, husband your strength, save your vitality, hang on to it with the determination with which a drowning man seizes and clings to a bit of log at sea. Store up every bit of your physical force, for it is your achievement material, your manhood timber. The man who has no money is rich compared with the man who has squandered his vitality, thrown away his precious life energy. Gold is but dross compared with this, diamonds but rubbish, houses and lands are contemptible beside it.

Dissipators of precious vitality are the wickedest kind of spendthrifts; they are worse than money spendthrifts; they are suicides, for they



are killing their great chance in life, their power to be strong, vital, efficient men and women. They are squandering their biggest asset.

Nature will pay your drafts only so long as there is anything to your credit. Suppose you do get a little advantage of her to-day and overdraw your account at the physical bank, you will have to pay for it sooner or later. She is an accurate and exacting bookkeeper. Every draft upon your vitality, every check upon your physical reserves, is charged to your account.

Nature is no sentimentalist. She demands the last penny due her. The man who thinks that he can turn night into day and disobey her laws, that he can eat anything and everything at any time, that he can ignore systematic and scientific living, that he can go without sufficient sleep, and that he can be as irregular in his habits as is convenient, will find all these things charged to him, and before he realizes it he will be a physical bankrupt.

Only recently I heard a man boasting that he had not taken a day's vacation in twenty years, and he does not understand why now,

at a little past fifty, he has been ordered by his physicians to quit work for at least a year.

I have often heard surgeons say of a person not over fifty, that he needed a surgical operation, but that his manner of living had evidently been such that it had exhausted his physical force and lowered his vitality to such a point that the operation would probably prove fatal.

Life insurance is a good thing, but it is infinitely better to insure oneself against the thousand and one emergencies of accident and disease by keeping the physical reserves just as high as possible.

In youth, we store up a reserve of vital energy which, if properly used, will enable us to overdraw temporarily in emergencies; but, if we continue to use, from day to day, more nervous or vital force than is generated during each twenty-four hours, it does not require a great mathematician to show that we shall soon be in the health court of bankruptcy.

It is what you accomplish in a day while leaving yourself a complete man, or a complete woman, with nerves unshattered, vitality unwasted by the wear and tear of the day's

work, that counts. You may crowd two days' work into to-day if you wish, but to-morrow you may be a physical bankrupt.

We rob ourselves of more than we can ever compute by being niggardly in the matter of health essentials—proper food, necessary rest, and refreshing recreation. Economize on anything else rather than on those things on which the very wellsprings of our being depend.

“Without health we can enjoy no fortune, honors, or riches, and all other advantages are useless.” Health is the pearl of great price which can be secured only by right living. Many a millionaire who has bartered his health for his millions, sighs for what all his wealth cannot restore.

No matter what your vocation or your ambition, you cannot afford to spoil your chance of making your life a masterpiece by overcrowding it with work or stinting it in any of the essentials needed for the building of a healthy, efficient personality.



## CHAPTER VII

### CURING THE CURSE OF INDECISION

“WHEN I don’t know whether to fight or not, I always fight,” said Nelson. This power of prompt and firm decision in a desperate crisis helped make Nelson one of the world’s greatest naval heroes.

This capacity for quick, final decision and swift action is one of the secrets of Lord Kitchener’s success. Napoleon had a wonderful faculty of deciding great questions, matters of profound importance, on the instant.

Von Moltke’s great motto was “First weigh, then venture.” The great German general was very cautious in planning and deciding, but, his resolve once made, bold to daring, even seemingly reckless, in execution.

The ability to arrive quickly and effectively at a conclusion is characteristic of all great leaders. It is a mark of a master mind. Men of unwavering decision are born conquerors.

Prompt decision and wholesouled action sweep the world before them.

The person whose decisions are final, with whom there is no reconsidering, no vacillating or wavering after he has once decided on a course of action makes us feel that we are in the presence of a great power. The "I have decided" of such a one is like a fiat of Fate. It quells all objections, puts an end to all discussions.

It is the positive, decisive man, who can say "No" with emphasis or "Yes" with vigor, and stick to it, that wins our confidence and wins out in life.

The man who knows what he wants, and makes a bee line for it always "arrives." On the other hand, the waverer, the balancer, the man who never knows his own mind, carries no weight and never arrives anywhere. Nobody has faith in him or in his judgment because they never know what minute he will take another task. He is not trusted, and he is not chosen for positions of responsibility.

Nothing else will help a young man who is struggling to get on more than the reputation of knowing what he wants, and of deciding

at once forcibly, and *finally*. The habit of prompt and energetic decision is in itself a tremendous asset.

The chief trouble with people who are cursed with the habit of indecision is that they cannot bear to sacrifice the things that conflict with their purpose; they don't want to let go of anything; they want to carry them all along. They want to eat their cake and have it, too.

Goethe said truly, "There is nothing more pitiable in the world than an irresolute man, oscillating between two feelings, who would willingly unite the two, and who does not perceive that nothing can unite the two."

Every important decision involves the letting go of something, and the more one tries to get away from this difficulty, the more he thinks over the thing to be decided, the more perplexed he becomes, the more he entangles the whole situation.

The man who trains himself to decide things quickly, and to put his decisions into execution instantly, has a tremendous advantage over the weak, vacillating character. He is saved an immense amount of time and energy, which the other wastes in considering and reconsid-



ering a question from every angle, and never coming to a firm and final decision on it. His mind is not forever lumbered with all sorts of half-decided questions and propositions hanging fire.

He knows that it is better to make a mistake now and then than to be forever hanging in the balance, weighing, and allowing the arguments pro and con to keep presenting themselves for reconsideration.

He knows that his decisions are the result of his best judgment; and having once decided he dismisses the subject absolutely from his mind and takes up the next thing pressing for his attention. This is the secret of his great capacity for getting things done. He keeps his mind free and clear of rubbish which cumbers and embarrasses the minds of less positive. less decided natures.

An undecided, vacillating man has a demoralizing influence. He communicates his uncertainty and vacillation to those about him. Every one who works for him catches his disease; it is as contagious as smallpox. He never quite knows what he wants to do; he is always on the fence. His employees cannot

decide things for him, and his affairs are always in a muddle. Everything about the establishment of which he is the nominal head, drags; the whole atmosphere is loaded with indecision. Orders are half executed, letters are half finished, repairs wait for more definite orders, and transactions with other people "hang fire" and finally are abandoned. An employer of this kind is continually out of patience with those employed by him, whereas, the root of the trouble lies in himself. The wavering, balancing, reconsidering mind indicates a weak, inefficient mentality.

The only way to buttress oneself against the deteriorating influence of negative mentalities and a negative environment is by cultivating and strengthening one's positive qualities.

There is no mental faculty which is not susceptible to very great development or the opposite, to enlargement or shrinkage, according to the way it is treated. Every faculty can be expanded by vigorous exercise, or it can be allowed to shrivel from inaction. No one need remain an undecisive, negative weakling unless he chooses to be such. He can make himself positive, decisive, forceful, if he will.

I know a young man who had such a negative mentality that his life threatened to be a practical failure until he began to study himself closely and to take stock of his mental assets. Then he got a glimpse of the difference between the success group of mental attributes and the failure group, and he immediately began to exercise a positive mental attitude in everything. He was naturally a waverer, a balancer. He had a perfect horror of settling anything of importance finally; he always left a loophole in case he wanted to reconsider his decision, which he invariably did. But now he forces himself to decide quickly, and once for all, everything that comes up. Even though he knows he may make a mistake, he will not allow himself to procrastinate, waver, or reconsider, because he has learned that to hesitate is failure.

He has replaced pessimism with optimism, and will not allow himself to think failure possible. He has put self-confidence and courage in the place of his former mistrust and timidity, and in a single year this young man has so developed his positive, creative faculties, that he has doubled his efficiency. His rapid progress has encouraged him to redouble his efforts in



strengthening his character, and to-day, instead of the weak, timid, vacillating, hesitating, shrinking, doubting youth of former years, he is a strong, vigorous, powerful personality.

Let any one take the opposite course and form the habit of wavering, of hesitating and reconsidering, of putting off final decisions just as long as possible, and after a while the power of prompt decision and action will become paralyzed. One may, through mental indolence or weakness, allow his positive constructive faculties to atrophy to such an extent that he will become incapable of acting quickly even in a matter of life or death.

It seems almost impossible for men and women with certain temperaments to commit themselves unreservedly to anything. There is always an "if" or an "and" or a "but," always some string to their decisions, some loophole out of which to crawl. These non-committal characters are disconcerted the moment they feel that there is no possible way of retreat. They cannot bear to think that they are committed to anything irrevocably. It terrifies them. If there is only some possible way out, they feel easy. If not, they are troubled.

They are panic-stricken at the thought of burning their bridges behind them and leaving no way of escape in case of necessity.

It is impossible for the habitual balancer, the man or the woman who is always weighing and reconsidering, to develop strength of purpose, a great projectile force, because such an one cannot stand by his decision. When a thing is always bobbing up for reconsideration, when action is delayed until the arguments for and against are pleaded over and over, the moment for effective action is often altogether lost.

Edna Lyall wrote a book called "Won by Waiting." A great book could be written upon "Lost by Waiting." More people have lost splendid opportunities, great chances in life, by waiting for more light, more time to weigh and think the matter over before deciding, than have ever lost by a too hasty decision.

No one can hope to succeed in these days, when every one is pusher or pushed, who has not positive force,—the power of rapid and firm decision. The man who hesitates, who stands still, not knowing which way to go, will very soon find himself pushed one side by more forceful men.

You must learn to trust your judgment, to decide without hesitation or reservation and to abide by your decisions, or you will never get anywhere.

The ability to decide things quickly, wisely and finally is always associated with the strong, positive qualities. Chief among these are directness and brevity.

Directness, like decisiveness, is the earmark of an efficient brain. Roundabout people are not efficient or effective. The indirect brain does not think clearly. It stumbles and fumbles and feels its way. The man of few words, who drives right at the heart of things, who strikes the marrow at the first attempt, is the man who accomplishes things.

Directness is characteristic of all successful business men. There are plenty of men with good education who know a great deal, but they cannot come to a focus, and the man who is a long time in coming to the point never knows where or when to stop. Like some of our railroads, he has poor terminal facilities.

Everybody dislikes indirectness, ambiguity, circumlocution, because these waste valuable time and clog progress. The direct method is



the winning one in every vocation. The ability to focus effort, to come quickly to the point and strike at the heart of a subject without circumlocution or preamble is a great factor of success.

The direct man, the man of few words, the decisive man, always carries weight and always makes a good impression. The chatterer, the man whose words precede his thoughts, arouses suspicion of the quantity and quality of his gray matter. You can tell by talking to a stranger for five minutes whether he is or is not a good business man by the number of words he uses and the directness or indirectness of his language in expressing his ideas.

It does not matter how able, well educated, or clever you may be, if you cannot come to the point decisively and effectively, if you lack the ability to focus your ideas, you will never make a leader of men.

"I saw one excellency within my reach," said Jay. "It was brevity, and I determined to obtain it." The ability to come to the point with few words, to think quickly, to decide promptly and to act directly,—these may seem simple enough, the commonest of common virtues, and

yet they are among the most important ingredients that go to the making of forceful men.

If you can decide promptly and finally, you are more likely to possess the other ingredients of this success group. If you cannot, don't lose any time in strengthening your weak point, for the power of firm decision is one of those "common virtues" which, in the end, often triumph over seemingly greater gifts.

One of the first things for a young man or young woman who wishes to make an effective life, a masterpiece, is to get rid of every weakness, every defect that would handicap his or her efforts.

I know of no habit which is so fatal to efficiency and especially to leadership as the habit of dawdling over one's decisions, weighing, balancing arguments on either side until one has lost the power to decide with any energy, vigor or finality.

If you are cursed with the habit of indecision you can cure yourself by the exercise of a vigorous will power. Resolve every morning that you will, during the day, decide things without possibility of recall. Make up your

mind that you will first of all get the best information at your command on your problem, that you will use your best judgment in making a decision, and that you will then close the incident, the contract, whatever it may be, and dismiss the whole affair from your mind. You will thus secure yourself against vacillating by refusing, after a matter is once closed, to wonder whether you have done the wisest thing, by resisting every temptation to open the matter for reconsideration.

I know several men who suffered from lack of confidence in their judgment, the inability to decide things for themselves, to act on their own initiative, to be greatly benefited by auto-suggestion. They had daily heart-to-heart talks with themselves something after this fashion: "My life so far has been seriously crippled, my career jeopardized, by this fatal lack in my mental make up, which I am now resolved to overcome. I have a fair education, good blood in my veins, and I am very ambitious. There is no reason why I should not make good. I am keenly aware that I have a lot of ability, but my one weakness is holding me back. I am simply paralyzed at the mere



thought of acting on my own judgment and deciding things for myself. I cannot seem to begin things of my own accord. I can work like a steam engine after I get started, but the very thought of beginning anything of importance for myself and putting it through without assistance or advice from others seems to paralyze my faculties. I have leaned upon others. I have depended upon them so long and acted under instructions for so many years that my faculty of initiative has never been developed.

“Now, I am going to change all this. From this time on, I am going to be a different sort of man. I am done with vacillation, the habit of balancing, reconsidering, the habit of asking everybody’s advice before I dare to begin things. I shall take as my model some man who is noted for his vigorous initiative and quick decisive action. I am not the vacillating John Jones that I was yesterday. To-day, I am James J. Hill, or I am John Wanamaker. Things have got to move to-day. There will be no dilly-dallying, no shilly-shallying, no wavering or balancing as heretofore. My decisions to-day will be quick and final. There

will be no opening them up for reconsideration.

"I may make mistakes, but I am going to do things. I am going to learn to trust my judgment. I do not propose to be a follower, a leaner, a trailer, all my life. I am going to be a leader. I am not going to wait for somebody to tell me what to do or to start me. I am not going to come back to my superior every little while like an automobile that is run out of gasoline, to be recharged with energy. I shall furnish my own motor power to-day and everybody around me will see that the Jones of to-day is not the man who was around here yesterday who did not know his own mind, and who was so timid that he never dared to start anything of his own accord. That man has been ousted forever. I have found myself, the real man that God made."

You will take on the strong, positive qualities you assume. You will gradually develop another personality—stronger, more self-reliant, more independent.

Whatever success qualities a great business man may lack, there are certain characteristics that are never absent. He must have a strong initiative. This means that he must be

original, inventive, resourceful and positive. Leaders are never negative. They are not imitators or copiers or cowards. They must have courage to think and act independently.

When we trust to the Divine within us, when we learn to decide vigorously and to depend upon our decisions, then the judgment will improve. But when we are conscious that we are likely to change our minds a half-dozen times after we have decided a thing, the quality of the judgment becomes impaired.

“Didn’t dare burn his bridges behind him, because he wanted to leave a way open; could not give up all hope of a retreat if the chosen career proved too difficult” has caused many a life failure.

There is a tremendous force in going into an undertaking with the irrevocable determination to win, with a grim resolve to reach the goal and take the prize at all hazards. The very effort of putting yourself into the winning attitude, resolving that if you make up your mind to study law, if you decide to become a lawyer, you are going to be a good one, a great one, and that you are willing to commit yourself unreservedly to your purpose and



to make any sacrifice in order to accomplish it, will insure your success. The very robustness of your determination will help you to overcome many obstacles which discourage the weak law student, who starts out with a sort of understanding with himself that he will try law anyway, and if he doesn't like it he can go into something else. Such a weak, halting decision will never make a lawyer of any man.

The trouble with most youths is that they are not half committed to their career. Their decision to stick to it is not irrevocable. They are so loosely attached to their life work that they are easily detached by discouragement or any outside influence. A man will never amount to much unless he is willing to burn all bridges behind him and commit himself to his work without reservation.

I have heard many people in mature life say, "If I had only stuck to my first decision, if I had trusted to my own judgment in choosing my life work, and then persisted in following it to a finish I might have amounted to something and been infinitely happier."

Multitudes of people have led miserable lives of regret, with thwarted ambitions torturing

them, simply because, in a moment of weakness, they allowed their own opinion to be overruled and turned aside from their original purpose.

If there is any time a person needs nerve, grit, stamina, will power to abide by an important decision, it is when tempted by the coward voice within or without which says, "Don't you see how foolish it is for you, how obstinate and wrong-headed, to cling to your own opinion about this thing, when everything is against your carrying it through! You are mistaken in your choice, and besides you have not the means nor the strength to back up your decision. How foolish to sacrifice years of comfort and pleasure at home among the people who love you for the sake of doing what you have undertaken! What if people do think you don't know your own mind, it is better to turn back and acknowledge your mistake than to go on and sacrifice so much."

Whatever you do, or however heavy your burden, do not lay it down when bombarded with such suggestions. Do not listen to the coward voice that urges you to change your mind because there are difficulties ahead.

Stand by your original decision. To reconsider it simply because the way of fulfillment is hard would be ruinous to character and all your future prospects.

Here are a few practical suggestions for those who are weak in decision:

Get every bit of information you can on the question up for decision, and then decide quickly and firmly.

The man who decides quickly can afford to make a mistake now and then.

One reason why many people have poor judgment is because they don't trust it; they let other people decide for them. Learn to trust your opinions and to have confidence in your decisions. A distrusted judgment is as bad as no judgment at all.

Vigorous decision is characteristic of successful men.

Let your decisions be final. Burn your bridges behind you. Don't leave open a convenient way of retreat.



## CHAPTER VIII

### UNLOCKING YOUR POSSIBILITIES

WHEN France was in the midst of a great revolution, when her throne was tottering and the people were in a panic, a colossal figure rose to the situation. A young unknown man, but one with a master mind, suddenly appeared on the scene to meet the great emergency. He knew what to do and he boldly asked to be allowed to command the situation. So it came about that the youthful Corsican, who not many years before had walked the streets a poor, dejected student, considering himself a failure and contemplating suicide, stepped to the front, seized a nation's helm and brought order out of chaos.

The European war is making marvelous revelations of men both to themselves and to the world. Many who hitherto considered themselves very common, ordinary mortals, have unexpectedly stepped into the limelight.

Fame is busy on the battlefield discovering men who had not yet found themselves. Raw youths are doing heroic things, which only yesterday they did not dream they could possibly do; and veterans are renewing their youth, and tapping sources of power which would have remained dormant, unknown even to themselves, but for their country's supreme need.

Many people are disappointed with their past. What you have accomplished is perhaps a mere apology for the life you expected to live, and the things you fully believed you would do. But how do you know that you have yet discovered yourself? How do you know that there is not something of the Napoleon, of the Wellington in you, something of the same heroic power which made these stupendous world figures; which is making heroes and leaders, world figures of the history that is being written to-day on the battlefields of Europe? How do you know but that you have been carrying up to the present moment great possibilities locked up within yourself because of the lack of just the right stimulus?

Many a man has been surprised at the sudden unlocking of the door into a new chamber

of his possibilities at thirty, forty, fifty, or even sixty years of age.

Forty years of ordinary living, ordinary events and ordinary routine did not even show a glimpse of General Grant's tremendous powers. He was graduated twenty-first in a class of thirty-nine. At thirty-two he was forced to resign from the Mexican army. He was in the customs house, in the real estate business, in the store, in the tannery, and was a comparative failure in them all. In none of them had he shown any of the stupendous ability which the Civil War brought out.

Neither General Grant, nor his friends, even suspected the giant which slept in his nature, until the war guns aroused him. Our Civil War was the emergency which ignited the spark which slept in Grant's flinty nature, and which would probably have slept there forever but for that tremendous crisis. At thirty-nine he was an obscure figure, working in a tannery in a small town. Four years later his name was a household word. He was an international figure. Fame had placed him among the immortals.

All through life we are constantly surprised



by revelations, new glimpses of ourselves, which show we have only been using a part of our forces, oftentimes a very small part, because of our ignorance of the great possibilities locked up within us.

How many when unexpectedly thrust into positions of responsibility have developed splendid qualities which they had never previously utilized! They did not even know that they possessed them.

The truth is, most of us are virtually strangers to ourselves. We know much less of ourselves than we do of those about us. The great majority of us never find our highest, most potent self. We live in the basement of our being, down among our weaker traits and our animal propensities. Only now and then one ventures into the upper stories of his life in search of his higher powers and grander possibilities. The majority of people go to their graves without ever discovering these, because they don't know how to find them, where to look for them. They are not trained to look within, and they die without discovering themselves.

“In education,” says Herbert Spencer, “the

process of self-development should be encouraged to the fullest extent. Children should be led to make their own investigations, and to draw their own inferences. They should be told as little as possible, and induced to discover as much as possible. Humanity has progressed solely by self-instruction; and that to achieve the best results each mind must progress somewhat after the same fashion, is continually proved by the marked success of self-made men."

One of the most striking examples of the success of the methods of self-discovery and self-development advocated by the great Victorian philosopher is to be found in General Sir William R. Robertson, K.C.V.O., K.C.B., D.S.O.

The story of this man's career is as inspiring as it is unique. At the age of nineteen, young Robertson, a powerfully built country lad, went up to London, and enlisted as a private in the Ninth Lancers. He had received only the rudiments of an education at an elementary school; but having resolved at the outset to make the most of himself, he began at once to supplement this by a course of self-instruction.

He invested his shilling a day,—the pay of a British private,—in books, and not content with studying in his spare time, while engaged in routine duties, he used to get comrades to read to him from the English classics.

Promotion from the ranks is not frequent in the English army, but after ten years young Robertson passed the very stiff examination, which gave him a commission in the Third Dragoon Guards. From this time on, owing solely to his determination and his persistent efforts to bring out and utilize every bit of the ability locked up within him, his career has been one unbroken series of successes. In India he found his first great opportunity, where, by making himself master of many of the native dialects, he performed distinguished services impossible to any officer not a lingual expert. He also distinguished himself for gallantry in action. In South Africa he earned the praise of Lord Roberts and Earl Kitchener for getting things done when others had failed. He was placed in command of the Army Staff College, an institution which gathers the ablest officers of the army for instruction in the higher branches of war. At



the outbreak of the European war he went to France as Quartermaster General to the British Expeditionary Force, where his success in keeping this army overseas supplied has led to his appointment as Chief of Staff.

As a brother officer said of this remarkable self-made man, "Every one must admire him. He has won his way without influence against odds by sheer hard work, making the most of his natural gifts."

If every human being could be aroused, waked up to his possibilities, to the potencies that are latent within him, and would do his best to utilize them, so rapid would be the advance, so marvelous the change, we should not know this old world at the end of a single year.

"But how do I know, how can I be sure that I have any undiscovered ability," young people often say to me. "If I only knew that I had the ability of a Roosevelt, an Edison, a Wanamaker, if I was sure of myself, sure that I could stand at the head of my profession, or my special line, there is no amount of hard work, of application, of drudgery, I would not undertake. No matter how many years it would take if I were sure of ultimate success I should not mind the work or the time."

Why do we not all have that enthusiasm in our work, that force and persistence which stimulate the great singer, the famous artist, the successful actor, the noted specialist, to the incessant, everlasting effort to improve in his or her specialty? Because most of us are not willing to pay the price for the larger thing, not willing to work hard enough for the initial successes that spur us to further endeavor; or we want to be absolutely certain of the end before we begin.

While you are wasting your time, envying the empire achievers, the race masters, you are losing an opportunity for enlarging your ability, for promoting your own advancement. While you are wondering what that mysterious power is which changes a mere operative into a superintendent, a floorwalker into a proprietor, a bell-boy into a hotel manager, a chorus girl into a star, a poor unknown lawyer into a Blackstone or a Choate, a district school teacher into a college president, a soldier in the ranks into a distinguished general, there are those with no more ability than you have who are actually making this transformation right before your eyes.

Dig down into yourself; there is where you will find your power; there is where you will find the key.

Most of us look outside instead of inside for our motor force. Since time began the human race has been hunting for help to bear its misfortunes, to improve conditions, to alleviate pain and disease, but ever seeking relief from without. We are just beginning to find that the help we have been crying for and looking for is inside and not outside of us. The power to obtain anything we need or ever can want is within us awaiting release, opportunity for expression.

What we bring out of ourselves depends largely on the energy and persistency of the call we make on the interior resources locked up in us. Many of these resources lie very deep within our being and ordinary occasions do not awaken and summon them to the aid of the average man or woman. It takes a great crisis, even a calamity, to reveal some of us to ourselves.

Hundreds of men who thought they were absolutely ruined when they had lost everything but their lives in the great San Francisco



earthquake and fire in 1908, were surprised to discover that what at the time seemed the greatest calamity in their lives was in reality a blessing in disguise. It proved to be just the developer they needed; it knocked out from under them all props and crutches, all dependencies, and revealed to them potencies and reserves of power which they had never before discovered in themselves. They were surprised to find that whereas they had previously depended on things, on property, on money, on friends, on influence, on pulls, they now found an infinitely greater force at their service. The power to retrieve their material fortunes was only a small part of their discovery.

The experience of those men was somewhat like that of a placer miner who for years had perseveringly worked the bed of a ravine in a California valley, hoping to find "pay-dirt." Many a time he was tempted to give it up, for he began to think that if he remained he would surely die in poverty. But one night came a great flood from a cloudburst in the mountains. It swept through the valley and carried away thousands of tons of sand. The miner thought all his little possessions, and

every possibility of making good, had gone with it. But, behold, when the waters had cleared away he found undreamed of wealth—gold which had lain under the sand far beyond his reach!

This is an age when efficiency and science are constantly discovering new sources of productive power, discovering and bringing great fortunes out of what a few years ago was considered waste material, absolutely useless for any purpose. To-day we are finding that nothing is useless. We are working everything into usable values.

We get light from the electric current in proportion to the number of candle power in the electric bulb. The filament in a four power candle lamp cannot take off the light of a sixteen candle power lamp. We are human bulbs attached to the great universal current of force and power, and the light which we give off depends on the candle power of our lamps. Many people go through life with a little dim four candle light, not because they lack power to generate a stronger light, but because they never learned how to express their power. Why be a candle when you can be an arc light?

Some people do not seem to know how to take stock of their resources, do not know what are their assets and what are their liabilities. They think they are low candle power lamps because they have not learned to transmute their current force into actual light or power. They underrate themselves until they get into the right place, or put forth their full strength.

How often we hear men refer to the fact that they were perfectly amazed at their rapid advancement in their business or profession, that they had very little idea that such a thing was possible to them, when they began. They thought they were bringing out the best in them away back at the start, before they ever commenced to achieve.

Many a man who has been regarded as fairly successful has gone away beyond middle age before he found just the right key which unlocked new and greater possibilities of which he had been entirely ignorant.

Von Moltke had not realized his colossal reserve power until the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War. Admiral Farragut never dreamed that he had the splendid possibilities which his run past the mines in Mobile Bay developed, and revealed to the world.



It is doubtful if Lincoln had the slightest idea of his colossal greatness before he was elected President and the crucial emergency of saving the Union called into action all of the superb qualities of the leader, the ruler, the man.

You may honestly believe you are doing your level best in your work, that you are using every bit of your energy and to the best possible advantage. In other words, you may believe that you are utilizing all of your powers, but let me tell you, if some great additional motive for exertion should come into your life to-day you would astonish yourself and those who know you by the undreamed of strength and added ability you would develop to meet the occasion.

How many of us have been thus confronted by a crisis in our lives which we did not anticipate, but which was so sudden and so imperative in its demand for strength and mastership that we were surprised at our ability to respond to the call to meet the emergency? It may have been the loss of property, a father's death which suddenly threw on us responsibilities to which we never dreamed we would be

equal. It may have been the failure to realize our pet ambition which made the sudden and unusual call for manliness, for womanliness, but whatever the emergency, it proved a self-revealer.

We none of us know how much gunpowder there is inside of us until the spark which sleeps in the flint awaiting friction is ignited. Many natures are so constituted that ordinary happenings in an ordinary career would not arouse or develop their greatest talents, which lie too deep to be easily ignited.

Centuries of peace would never have brought the best out of men like Von Moltke and Grant. You cannot tell what is in many a man until he has passed through some tremendous crisis, something great enough to awaken the potencies in his nature.

The greatest thing that can happen to a human being is to be aroused, to be waked up to the knowledge of the miracle working powers locked within himself. The first step to a successful life is really self-discovery, for no matter how great one's dormant possibilities one cannot use any more of them than he has discovered.

The real problem of education is how best to show youth its possibilities, how to arouse its latent energies, how to give the boy and girl a picture of the highest possible self, how to stimulate its growth and development. The pumping of facts into a pupil's brain, the teaching him by reiteration and imitation, filling his mind with facts and theories and rules, is not education. It is merely mental stuffing. The real education is evolution, calling out what is in the mind, developing it, exercising the mental faculties until they become vigorous and strong enough to seize, to grip and to hold.

The teacher who by encouragement and inspiration leads youth to self-discovery is the greatest of all educators.

A very successful man told me that by far the best thing he took from college was not the diploma which, at his graduation, seemed the most important of all, but that which, as his college days faded more and more from memory, grew ever larger, and more and more illuminated his whole life,—the inspiration he received from one professor, who seemed to touch a spring in his inner self, tapping a great fountain within him which had become the well-



spring of his life. Most of the facts and theories acquired during his college course had gradually faded from his memory, but the inspiration from this professor's marvelous personality, which had touched his life to finer issues and had worked miracles in his nature, had never faded.

If when leaving school or college we more generally knew the possibilities back of our latent generative thought faculties, what marvelous powers, what resources we could call out of ourselves early in life!

The chief trouble with most of us is that we do not half try to discover ourselves. We do not make a supreme effort to bring out latent powers. We skim along the surface without ever trying to find the keys which would unlock our possibilities, release the latent forces that slumber in the deeps within us. We are content to plod along in the same old rut of mediocrity rather than make the effort that would lift us to the untrodden ground above.

You will never make your life count for much until you at least try to find yourself. In order to do this you should put yourself in

the most favorable position possible for self-discovery; you should, if possible, keep close to people who have succeeded in a large way along the line of your ambition.

Contact with strong, forceful personalities is a great help to self-discovery. It inspires our souls and lights a fire on the altar of our lives which never goes out.

When Wendell Phillips, a brilliant young graduate of Harvard, was just beginning to practise law, he heard William Lloyd Garrison depict the horrors of slavery. It aroused a latent sense of injustice in the young lawyer's nature which resulted in his closing his law office forever and espousing the black man's cause.

Emerson aroused the faculties of many thousands of dormant minds which, perhaps, but for him would never have been awakened. He changed their philosophy of life, he awakened their idealism, and opened to them the door of a new world.

Daniel Webster discovered many a latent orator, and Phillips Brooks and Henry Ward Beecher inspired many a youth to enter the pulpit.

Thousands of youths in England were led to nobler lives by Ruskin and Gladstone. It has been said that every youth of the Gladstonian period in England was influenced by Gladstone's remarkable career. A similar thing may be said of that of his great rival, Disraeli. So have multitudes of young Americans been stirred to more powerful effort by Theodore Roosevelt's dynamic personality.

Many business houses place pacemakers in different parts of their establishments with a view of spurring others on, arousing their ambition to do likewise. The normal youth who sees another doing any special work along the line of his own talent is naturally aroused and stimulated, prodded to greater effort.

Race horses make better time when trotting with a running mate. The determination to keep up or to get a little ahead is thus stimulated. Two race horses running neck and neck will make better time than either one could make alone because each stimulates, urges, and inspires the other.

All through life we come across these ambition arousers, these character molders, and if we are eager to follow up the lead they give us we cannot help being benefited.



While the extent to which our brains are aroused, our dormant faculties awakened depends in the first place on ourselves, the chief factors in our development are our particular environment, our travels, the people we meet, the ideals we choose, our education, the books we read.

Some of our great authors have lighted the literary fires of many young writers, who, perhaps, might never have written a line but for their awakening.

Shakespeare aroused a certain territory in the brain area of a vast multitude of people and made fertile what would otherwise have remained a desert. Who can estimate what the world owes to the awakening of dramatic ability by this master dramatist?

How little we realize our tremendous obligation to the beacon lights of history, the heroes and heroines who figure so largely in its pages! Think how barren and sterile our lives would be if all of the great souls whom we love and admire, whose example has done so much to shape our character were blotted out of our experiences!

What an irreparable loss it would be to the

race if every trace of Abraham Lincoln were erased from our history, and from the consciousness of our people! Thousands of youths are saved from discouragements and back-turnings every day because of their knowledge of the triumphant struggles and trials of Abraham Lincoln. When they think of the obstacles this marvelous frontier boy overcame and the difficulties he conquered in order to develop himself to his highest capacity, they feel ashamed to turn back or to give up the struggle for their ideal.

Different things arouse different personalities. Different experiences arouse and awaken certain distinctive qualities and faculties in our brain. It may be a stimulating book, an inspiring lecture or sermon, or a bit of advice and encouragement from a friend who believes in us. It may be some emergency, some crisis in our life, it may be travel, it may be a careless conversation, a new experience, or it may be some great affliction or failure in our undertakings that brings out our noblest qualities, that gives us an entirely new view of ourselves.

Whatever the cause, we know that the progress of the world depends on the extent to

which we discover and use our possibilities. The miracles of civilization have come from the awakening of latent powers in the individual.

The sight of negro children being separated from their fathers and mothers and sold into slavery, and of happy families broken up and bought and sold in the marketplace like cattle, when Lincoln made his first trip to New Orleans, aroused in his soul a revolt against such inhumanity, and started a fire in his nature which helped to burn slavery out of our constitution.

Lord Erskine, when a poor unknown youth, had his genius for law awakened by wandering into a law court one day and listening to an impassioned plea before a jury by one of England's great barristers. The young man was so overwhelmed by the discovery of his latent passion for law that he could scarcely contain himself until he began his legal studies. Then and there he resolved upon his future career. That simple incident changed the course of his whole life. It gave him the key to himself and gave to England one of her greatest legal lights.

There are a thousand chambers in our na-



tures each closed by a sort of human Yale lock which may never be opened unless we find the right key. Some of us are constantly opening up new chambers of whose existence we had been entirely ignorant. A chance acquaintance has inspired many a life and changed the whole career. The warm grasp of a friendly hand, a kind, encouraging word has proved the turning point in life to many a discouraged soul who was "down and out" and who had given up trying to "make good" or to discover himself. We never can tell what will unlock some new chamber in the great within of us and release undreamed of pent-up power.

Change of environment, a new experience, or an inspiring book may be the key which will unlock immense possibilities within you and let in a flood of light where before only darkness and silence dwelt.

The degree of our achievement depends, to a certain extent, upon the accident of coming across the right stimulus, which arouses our ambition or awakens dormant faculties. I have often heard successful men say that if it had not been for a certain thing which happened in their career they would probably

never have been anything like as successful as they were.

If possible, get into an ambition arousing, stimulating environment. You will be surprised to find how such an environment will stir you to redouble your efforts, will awaken your slumbering powers and spur you on to renewed endeavor.

People who seclude themselves from their kind, who do not care to meet others, who do not wish to move out of the familiar routine, people who get in a rut, make a great mistake. They do not realize that by shutting themselves out from new, fresh experiences they are never likely to find the keys to the many Yale locks in their natures, the opening of which may mean new hope, new life, greater possibilities of service, of success, and happiness.

Human beings were made to live together, to mingle with one another; and the good mixer, the man who keeps in the swim of things, who loves his kind, not only makes his life happier and more useful, but he is constantly developing himself and enlarging his nature. Associating with people, especially those of culture and wide experience, is a great

education. It grinds off the rough corners of the human rough diamond, lets in the light and reveals hidden beauties and values.

All of us can, if we will, help others to find themselves. And the inspiring of other lives, helping them to open up new possibilities, letting the light into unknown tracts in their nature, is the grandest work a human being can do. The world needs great inspirers, great encouragers, those who can arouse the latent powers of the average man and woman, more than it needs great lawyers, physicians, or statesmen.

But until we have first found ourselves, we cannot do much to help others in their quest. Life is a voyage of discovery for all of us, and, in the last analysis, each soul must act the Columbus to his own undiscovered territory, his unknown self.



## CHAPTER IX

### BETTERING OUR BEST

A BUNGLER at his work once apologized for his blunders, saying that he did the best he knew how. "Any fool can do that," said his employer, "I wanted you to do something better than that."

"What is your best work?" was the question asked of Ward, the sculptor. "My next," he said.

The constant effort to better our best, to reach a high ideal, calls out the finest and noblest qualities in our nature. If I were looking for an employee and found a person who had this bettering his best characteristic, I would ask for no other recommendation.

Nothing else so reveals the very heart and marrow of character as the way in which we do our work, the spirit, the quality we put into it. A botched job shows a botched ideal, a low ambition. A finely wrought piece of work is an indication of a superior mentality.

As a rule, the great things of the world are not done by great strokes of genius. The formidable man in competition is the man who is forever bettering his best, who is always beating his own record.

A marshall once rushed up to Napoleon during a battle and exclaimed, "Sire, we have taken a battery!" "Take another," was the great general's reply.

Many people cease to grow or to advance because they become satisfied with any unusual record or achievement, and rest on their laurels.

One of the most successful men I have ever known has no brilliancy whatever, no mark of genius, except a genius for everlastingly improving on his previous work. His success is due to his having resolved early in life that each to-morrow must find him at least a little further than to-day. This man has never made any brilliant strokes in his achievement, but the constant effort to improve on everything he does, to make to-day's work better than the best he did yesterday has become a passion with him, and it has wrought marvels in his career. Many people cannot understand

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how a man with such apparently ordinary ability could have achieved as much as he has. This everlasting bettering of his best is the secret of it all.

There is no one so humble that he cannot improve his condition, if, "without halting, without rest," he is constantly "lifting better up to best."

If more people realized that great things are not always done by wonderful strokes of genius or brilliancy, they would not so often wait and wait for some extraordinary motive, some unusual opportunity for making a great hit, instead of trying to make each day a triumph over yesterday. The plodder, who has an ideal, who tries to do everything he undertakes better than it has ever been done before, who is everlastingly trying to improve his best, gets way ahead of the man who is always waiting for a big opportunity, for a chance to do what he considers something worth while.

It is simply amazing what a single year of this constant betterment policy will accomplish. It is just a little more improvement here and a little better work there that really accomplishes the things worth while. A little



better work here and a little more painstaking there, three hundred and sixty-five days in the year, will effect what to many appear miracles.

In an address to an audience of boys in New York City, Charles M. Schwab, the millionaire steel manufacturer, said: "No matter what business you enter, the essential feature to success is that you perform your tasks better than anybody else. This alone will command attention. Everybody is expected to do his duty, but the boy or man who does a little more is certain of promotion."

People wonder sometimes why such a youth gets on so much faster than others. They say he has been lucky. The secret of his "luck" lies in the difference between the ordinary and the excellent. The man who pushes the standard of excellence a little higher, who is original, resourceful, progressive in his methods, who leaves the beaten track to push into new fields, who is constantly on the alert for the slightest improvement in his way of doing things, is that exceptional man who forges his way to the front. There is always a place for him. There is a standing advertisement for him all over the world. It was the quality of better-

ing his best, of doing a little more than was expected of him, that made William Edward Bemis one of the most prominent officials of the Standard Oil Company. Mr. Bemis rose from the position of a humble accountant to the head of the Company's foreign department, in which capacity he traveled all over the world.

The youth's position was generally regarded as dull and almost hopeless. But he was on the lookout for ways of improving his routine work, and managed to attract the attention not only of his immediate superiors but of the heads of the corporation.

"This he did," as recently told in the newspapers announcing his death, "by making some reports of comparative costs in the several refineries that were recognized as both novel and valuable. Thus started he rose rapidly in the Standard Oil hierarchy."

You can tell very quickly when going through a business establishment for the first time what are the principles of the head of the house. Do you find an employer who is not satisfied with what was done yesterday or last week, who is always striving to better his best,

to make to-day a little better than any day before in his business or profession? It is such a man who is always bettering the appearance and conveniences of his establishment, who is always improving its service and facilities, and trying to be a little more up-to-date in the styles and the quality of his merchandise, who is always working for greater efficiency everywhere, that wins.

It is in every man to be first-class in something, if he will. Only himself can hold him back. There is no excuse for incompetence in this age of opportunity and efficiency; no excuse for being second-class when it is possible to be first-class, and when first-class is in demand everywhere.

Second-class things are wanted only when first-class cannot be had. We wear first-class clothes if we can pay for them, eat first-class butter, first-class meat, and first-class bread, or, if we don't, we wish we could. Second-class men are no more wanted than any other second-class commodity. They are taken and used when the better article is unobtainable.

If you make yourself first-class in any useful line, no matter what your condition or cir-



cumstances, no matter what your race or color, you will be in demand. If you are a king in your calling, no matter how humble it may be, nothing can keep you from success.

But excellence, superiority, costs something. You must make sacrifices for it. You must keep your mind alert, you must be right on your job every minute, constantly trying to lift better up to best. Of course it is much easier to slide along the line of least resistance, to be superficial, sloppy and slovenly in your work, than to pay the price of excellence in a daily struggle for improvement. It rests entirely with ourselves whether we shall be first or second-class men or women in our line. We can all improve on yesterday's work if we will.

Any young person starting in life would feel insulted if any one should hint that he would never do any better than he is now doing. What would a young lawyer say, for instance, if he were told that he had conducted his best case, that he never again would exceed any past effort, that he had made his greatest plea before the jury, had passed his high water mark, and that he never again would go beyond what he had accomplished? What

would a contractor say if he were told that he had built his best possible house or building, that he never could improve upon what he had already done? What would any young stenographer say if she were told that she had done her best work, that she never again would exceed her past record, never again do anything superior to what she had done?

Why, they would each receive such a statement with an indignant protest to the contrary. The most ordinary clerk would feel insulted if you were to tell him that he never again could be more alert, more thorough, more courteous, that he could never again please a customer in any respect better than he had done in the past.

There is something in every one of us which tells us that we can do better, that we are capable of much more than we have yet done. We all know that we can improve on our past; we all know that we can do things better than we have done them before. We can put more energy, more life, more enthusiasm, more dead-in-earnestness in our efforts than we have been in the habit of doing.

I don't know of a soul in my whole acquaint-

ance; I don't know of a single clerk, or a single salesman, a lawyer, a writer, an artist or a business man, who cannot do his work better than he is doing it right now. Even the most conscientious of us can do better than we are doing. We can all improve and enlarge our ability very materially. We all know that it is perfectly possible and practical to do better than we have ever done in the past. Then why don't we? Why do we plod along in ruts or in mediocrity? Why are we cursed with this inertia which keeps us from going up higher? Why are we doing the little things when we are capable of something bigger?

Is it manly, is it womanly, is it honest, to complain of our hard luck, to whine because we do not get ahead when we know in our hearts—if we are honest with ourselves—that we are not doing our level best, our possible best in everything we undertake? The very fact that we should feel insulted if told that there was nothing better possible in us than we had already exhibited, that we never could get any higher than we are now, proves that we feel there is something stirring within us that we have not yet called out.



The fact is we are not half severe enough with ourselves; we are too easy, too lenient; we coddle ourselves too much. Like an easy-going mother, we do not demand enough of ourselves; we are too lax in our self-discipline, too indulgent in our self-training methods. We allow ourselves to do all sorts of things which we would condemn in a child or in another. Our mental inertia, our inclination to shirk the hard problems, to pick out the easy things first, our shrinking from the disagreeable—these are all proofs that we are not putting forth our best efforts.

Perhaps you think you have been doing your best to make yourself first-class, and to get on and up in the world, but suppose some one should offer to double, treble, or quadruple your income or salary if you could bring yourself up to a certain standard of excellence and maintain it, say for six months, do you not think you could bring something out of yourself that a smaller motive has never produced? Do you not think, if you had that big incentive ahead of you, you could bring out a little more ingenuity, a little more inventiveness, a little more painstaking endeavor, a little

keener interest, a little more alertness? Do you not think you would crowd much more work into the day and do it much better? Do you, my young business friend, think you would be so very particular about going from and coming to your task just on the minute? Do you think you would take five or ten minutes at noon or at night getting ready so you could slip out on the very minute? Do you not think you would be a little more accurate, a little more painstaking? Do you think you would make quite as many careless blunders as you do now, quite as many mistakes?

You know very well that under such conditions you would make the most of every opportunity to win the offered reward. You would go to your work in the morning a little ahead of time, in prime condition to do your best. You would see that your appearance was spic and span; you would never wear soiled linen or unpolished shoes, or have spots on your clothing. You would be as careful to appear at your best going to your place of business every day as you would in going to some important social gathering. You know that nothing could induce you to be irregular

in your habits, especially in your eating habits, or careless about your health. You would get plenty of good exercise every night and morning. In other words, you would leave no stone unturned in order to secure that large increase of salary.

But, you say, there is no such incentive ahead of you. Perhaps not, in that particular form, but there is something better. It is infinitely better for you to make your life a masterpiece than to double your income. Making your life a masterpiece means everything to you because it affects your ultimate destiny. You do not know that you will ever have another chance like the present. The great clock of time ticks off every day forever, and these days will never return. Thus your chances for making good are each day, each hour, reduced by so much. No wasted hours or squandered days can be recovered. Once lost always lost.

Why not make up your mind, beginning with this moment, that you will make everything you touch, everything you take up, everything you put your hand to count? Why not resolve that you will make this year of your life mean more than any year of the past?



You have perhaps been a colorless, indifferent member of society, performing your duties perfunctorily. If so, change your attitude. Do everything with a new spirit, a new aim. Determine that you will not be a second-class man or woman, that you will never earn your living by your second best, that you will be first-class in everything. Resolve that wherever you are, you are going to make yourself felt, that you are not going to be a silent, timid looker-on, but that you are going to radiate power, forcefulness, masterfulness.

This is a resolution you can keep, whatever your position, and every day you carry it out will give you a new grip upon yourself, a better grip on your job, and a new satisfaction will come to you.

Do not be satisfied with yourself merely because you can do a thing better than somebody else. This is unworthy of you. Measure yourself by your own possibilities, not by those of somebody else. Remember that merely "getting ahead" of your neighbor may be "getting behind" your own possibilities.

Teach yourself to be above doing anything else than your best, to despise inferiority in

anything, either in the quality of your work or in your service. Let this be your motto: "Make every occasion a great occasion, for you cannot tell when some one may be taking your measure for a larger place." There is only one aim that is worthy of the effort of a real man, and that is to do his level best everywhere and always.

Do not think so much about the great big boost coming to you from some mysterious source; just better your best each day, improve your success faculties. Concentrate a little more on your work, have more courage in daring and doing, intensify your efforts, increase your dead-in-earnestness, and before you realize it you will have multiplied tremendously your power to make good in everything you undertake.

If ordinary efforts can achieve a fair success what will not extraordinary efforts accomplish? If a fair amount of intelligence and ordinary concentration of mind will often enable one to get along very well what can one not do by bringing to his work a superb enthusiasm, by putting his whole heart in it, coming to it every day with a fixed determination to make it not

passable, or fairly good, but excellent, in short by doing one's work in the spirit of a master, of an artist instead of an artisan?

That little difference between the good and the better, between the better and the best, that little difference between ordinary skill and expertness, has determined the career of many an individual—has meant mediocrity or a life of distinction.

In this great war crisis, in addressing the English people, David Lloyd George said that nothing short of their best could possibly pull them through this frightful conflict. How aptly this applies to all of us, for we are all engaged in a great conflict! The whole of life is a perpetual battle in which nothing short of your best efforts will bring out your highest possibilities and make you victorious. Nothing but your best continuously put forth can possibly give you the enduring satisfaction which can only come from making the most of life. Nothing but your best can win your own approval.

There is a silent judge in each of us, weighing and measuring our acts, approving or disapproving. We cannot bribe this judge. If



we do wrong we are punished. If we do right we are rewarded. Nothing less than our best, not spasmodically, but all the time, will satisfy this exacting inward judge. Only our best on every occasion can lift our lives and give enduring satisfaction.

## CHAPTER X

### THE WILL TO SUCCEED

A NEW howitzer throws a shell more than twenty-five miles. But in order to do this there must be a tremendous propulsive explosive back of the shell. It must be confined and liberated in a certain manner. If the gunner should put in only half the required amount of powder the shell would never reach its mark. It would fall short just in proportion to the lack of energy back of it. It is not only necessary to have ample powder back of the shell, but it must be the best kind of powder, containing the maximum of energy. No army could afford to go into battle with lifeless powder.

People everywhere are going into the battle of life with poor or insufficient powder, and, naturally, they fall short of their mark. The projectile power of your ambition depends wholly on the vigor of the determination be-

hind it. What you accomplish will depend on the amount of live energy, of enthusiasm and will power you put into your efforts to achieve.

It is pitiable to see multitudes of people weakly longing for success, but not willing to pay the price for the big things they desire. They do not seem to realize that there is a tremendous difference between wishing to get on and determining to get on, between the desire that has no "must" in it and the desire which grips every fiber of one's being with a determination to win at any cost. They have not had it impressed on them that the difference between a mediocre career and a superb career is the difference between waiting for something favorable to turn up, for some big opportunity, waiting for help, for somebody to boost one, and taking off one's coat and plunging into his career with a grim determination which knows no defeat.

Your resolute will, your firm determination to succeed in whatever you undertake, will carry you up stream, no matter how strong the current, or what obstacles may oppose you. But if your will is weak, your determination wavering, like a dead fish, you will float down



stream with multitudes of other human derelicts who have not enough vim or will power to force their way up stream.

It does not matter how much ability you have, if you lack that power of resolution which knows no surrender, which fixes on its goal and never turns back, you will not achieve anything worth while, anything distinctive.

In this day of sharp, close competition it is only those who fling the weight of their whole being into their vocation, only those who are "all there," who can succeed in any marked, individual way. Half-hearted or indifferent effort produces only half-hearted results.

Write it in your heart that there is no success worth the name outside of what a man or a woman achieves through his or her own efforts. Emerson voiced a great truth when he said: "It is only as a man puts off from himself all external support and stands alone that I see him to be strong and to prevail."

No youth is started right in life until he feels that it is up to himself alone to make good. Until he has gotten over the idea that he must wait for somebody to give him a lift, to boost or push him forward before he can begin his

work; until he has decided that he, and he alone, shall be the builder of his career, the structure will never be built.

The world is full of people who are waiting to be pushed, boosted, helped, but they will never be anything but weaklings. If they do succeed through pull or influence in getting the place they long for, they will not have the ability to hold it. I know men who are always talking of the wonderful things they would have done if they had only had a chance such as others have had; if they could only have gone to college; if they could have had special training for the thing they wanted to do. But they had nobody to send them to college, nobody to help them make their lives more complete, their achievement more worth while.

Those who make such excuses for their mediocre lives would not have amounted to anything no matter what their advantages. The self-reliant, the courageous soul will make good in spite of all handicaps and obstacles, all influences that would try to hold him back.

There are thousands of boys and girls in our colleges and universities to-day who would never have been there but for their faith in

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themselves and their stern resolve, come what might, to get an education. Many of them were on farms in backwoods districts, or in workshops and factories. They were not only poor, but had others depending on them. Yet despite all their handicaps, they resolved that they must and would somehow, sometime, in some way go to college. It did not matter that others laughed at them as dreamers, and told them it was impossible. That always happens when one tries to rise from a lowly condition. They resolved and carried out their resolution. And not only they, but, in the long run, society would be poorer if any "kind" friend had stepped forward and paid their way.

"Trust thyself. Every heart vibrates to that iron string."

Even a baby must trust itself, must dare, or it will never learn to walk. A dog which should be afraid to experiment would never learn to swim. Animals and young children often show more intelligence in this respect than grown men and women.

Swimming, for instance, is purely a matter of belief in one's own power. Thousands of



people have drowned merely because they did not believe they could swim. The moment timidity is overcome and one gets complete possession of himself, becomes thoroughly conscious of his power, he can swim.

You will be amazed to find how the moment you cut off all outside assistance you will be reënforced by a new power from within which you never before dreamed you possessed. But it will never come to your aid until you stop leaning and depending, until you throw away all crutches and stand erect on your feet.

The late Cornelius Vanderbilt showed at a very early age the value of self-reliance, a quality which distinguished him through life. When a mere lad, with no other assistance than a letter of recommendation from his teacher, he applied to the president of the Shoe and Leather Bank of New York for a job.

The president read the letter, and asked the boy if he was related to Commodore Vanderbilt.

"Yes, he is my grandfather," was the reply.

"Then, why didn't you get him to introduce you?" inquired the banker.

"Because I didn't want to ask him for any-

thing; I didn't want any one to help me," said the sturdy applicant for a job.

He was employed as a messenger boy, and from this start manifested the other fine qualities that made the successful man.

When Commodore Vanderbilt heard of the incident, it is said he was so pleased with his grandson's independent, self-reliant spirit, that he added a codicil to his will, leaving him an extra million dollars.

One of the worst misfortunes that can befall any one is to be relieved of the necessity of developing his self-help qualities. With few exceptions a pampered youth becomes a pigmy; he seldom develops into a strong and vigorous type of manhood.

Training in self-help and self-reliance are just as essential for any career that is worth while as is the training of a medical or a law school for the preparation of those who would enter the medical or legal professions. A young man could never become a skillful physician or a clever lawyer by lying around in a luxurious home, being waited upon by servants, indulged in all sorts of ways by a rich father.

Say what we will, as surely as the purpose of a watch is to keep time, the supreme meaning of man is the development of power. And nothing but determined effort and self-reliance will develop our greatest strength and bring out the best that is in us.

Children who are coddled, waited upon by inches, circumscribed in their acquaintance and contact with the great throbbing mass of humanity, are always weaklings, inefficient and often offensive. There is no more odious little animal than the boy who has become a snob through the neglect of a money-making father, and the foolish fondness of a money-spending mother who thinks nothing is too good for her darling. The outsider is inclined to wish for all such boys the experience of Kipling's young hero in "Captain Courageous," who had some of his foolishness washed out of him by falling overboard from an ocean steamer, and the rest hammered out by the sensible fishermen who rescued him from the waves.

In contrast with such weaklings as these, what an inspiration there is in the life of the newsboy, Wendell Scoy, who worked twelve years selling newspapers that he might obtain a college education.



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During those twelve long years, through summer heat and winter snows, this boy stood at the Thirty-third Street and Ridge Avenue entrance to Fairmount Park in Philadelphia, and by judicious saving accumulated twenty-six hundred dollars, which he put into a four years' course at the University of Pennsylvania.

There is no place in modern life for the man who has no stamina, no courage in his nature, who is simply material for stronger minds to manipulate and use for their own advantage. The very idea is opposed to all the principles of democracy. No one in the world is capable of making your life program for you, because no one was ever born who is just like you or knows so well as you ought to know what you can do best.

I have before me a letter from a young man asking me to tell him "how to make things happen." Now, the young man who has a definite goal in view, who is in earnest in his purpose to attain his ambition and make his life count will not ask any one to tell him how he can make things happen. The Lincolns, the Grants, the Gladstones, the Disraelis, the

Edisons, the Wanamakers, Carnegies and Schwabs, the men of the past and present everywhere who swam up stream to their goal did not ask any one to tell them how they could make things happen.

In this strenuous age a man must be either pusher or pushed. If he does not make things happen, they will not happen at all, so far as he is concerned. The dawdler, the idler, the undecided, easy-going man who does not quite know his own mind, who doesn't know exactly what he wants, who is always wobbling in his opinion, irresolute of purpose never makes things happen. If you are going to accomplish anything you must brace up and bring into action the resources the Creator has implanted within yourself, and make use of those outside of you on every hand only waiting to be utilized.

The very thing which you think is holding you back may be made an instrument for the accomplishment of your purpose, if only you have the self-reliance to forge ahead and compel its service.

It is push, energy, virility of character, tenacity of purpose, clear grit and will power

that make things happen. If you wait for some one to set things moving, or to tell you just when and where and how you can do this, you will float down stream in company with other dead fishes.

We must use the means that we have to accomplish our ends. And we will win the battle in spite of defects in our armor; we will succeed with the tools already at hand, if we are built of the sturdy, self-reliant stuff that does not balk at obstacles, nor cry out for assistance at every little difficulty that rises on the horizon.

Napoleon said: "God is always on the side of the strongest battalions." In the moral sense that is true. He is always on the side of the best prepared, the most vigilant, the pluckiest, and the most determined.

That door ahead of you (you who are grumbling that you can't force an entrance) is probably closed because you have closed it—closed it by lack of training; by a lack of ambition, energy, and push. While you have been waiting for some one else to give you the key to open it, a pluckier, grittier fellow has stepped in ahead of you and opened it himself. Power gravitates to the determined man.



I have never known one who "thinks" he will, or "will try to" do a certain thing ever to amount to much. It is the resolute soul whom you cannot keep from doing what he undertakes that gets to the front. I know young men who are so wedded to their life aim, so determined to realize it that you might as well try to defy the law of gravitation as try to keep them back. One of these is totally blind, yet he made up his mind to be a doctor, and in spite of his fearful handicap studied medicine and has won his M.D. diploma. Two boys, one of whom has lost a leg, and the other both legs, are earning money to pay their expenses at college. Their misfortune did not rob them of courage and resourcefulness, and make them a burden to their relatives. It only seemed to whet their desire to "make good."

Many a man with nothing like the handicaps of these youths has tried to justify his failure on the ground that he was doomed by the cards which fate dealt him; that he had none other with which to play the game, and that no effort, however great, on his part, could materially change the result. Clear grit plays the game with the cards it has. It does not ask an impossible pack.

That is the excuse of a fatalist. There is no room or need for it in the program of a determined person. The fate that deals your cards is in the main your own resolution. The result of the game does not rest with fate or destiny, but with you. You have within you the power to change the value of the cards which fate has dealt, because there is no fate outside of yourself. The turn of the game depends upon your self-training, upon the way you are disciplined to seize and use your opportunities, upon your ability to put grit in the place of superior advantages.

"If I wasn't so burdened with a family to support," said a man who was constantly blaming conditions for his lack of success, "I could conquer the earth; but as it is I can do nothing." The day came when he lost his family, when he was free to do as he pleased. Then he moaned: "If I had some one to work for, there would be an incentive to try; but now there is no one to care, so why should I concern myself?"

The weakling is always armed with excuses. His path is always blocked by "insurmountable" obstacles. But for the valiant soul there

are no such things as insurmountable obstacles. Handicaps, opposition, abuse, ridicule, only strengthen his determination to overcome. He is so dead in earnest that his purpose reënforces itself just in proportion as it is opposed.

This sort of divine dead-in-earnestness to make the best of oneself, to make one's life count in God's universal plan is a characteristic of all great souls.

Abraham Lincoln was dead in earnest in his self-development, as in everything else he undertook. He was determined to be prepared for great opportunities. This demanded an education, and so he educated himself. He did not remain ignorant because he could not go to Harvard. If the difficulties in the way of getting an education had looked as formidable to him as to his young companions Lincoln's name would have been no more in evidence to-day than are theirs. His memory, like theirs, would have been blotted out. But he believed there was a divinity in his desire, that he was not mocked with an ambition for greatness without the ability to match it with reality. He saw possibilities where those other youths saw only impossibilities. It was



the same with every obstacle that blocked his way, from getting an education to emancipating a race.

No man ever develops his possibilities who is afraid to tackle things that "can't be done," who fears to attempt what others term the "impossible."

Nearly everything of importance that has been done in the history of the world at one time appeared impossible. Civilization would still be in an elemental stage but for the fact that things that seemed impossible to the majority of people have been done by those who had faith in themselves and in their great purpose.

The steam engine, gas and electric lighting, telegraphy, telephony, the Atlantic cable, the aëroplane, every invention, every progressive idea that has helped mankind to go forward was met at first either by a storm of ridicule, or the cry of "impossible." To-day we are more open-minded. We are beginning to realize that nothing the brain of man can conceive is impossible. "It can't be done," "It is impossible," are fast becoming only the weakling's excuses. The man of courage and re-

source pays no attention to such parrot cries.

Man develops only through self-effort. If there were no obstacles to overcome there would be no progress. The young man or the young woman who follows somebody else in life, who always leans upon others, will never be a complete man or a complete woman. Experience is of no practical use to such a one, for he never acquires power, which is developed only through self-help.

We see a great many of these leaning, flabby, purposeless characters, who have not the moral courage, the persistence, the force of will to get the things which stand between them and their ambition out of the way. They allow themselves to be pushed this way and that, and into things for which they have no fitness or taste. They have not strengthened their backbone sufficiently to enable them to fight their way to their goal. In fact they have no definite purpose, no goal in view, and they get nowhere.

It would be as impossible for a ship to come into a certain port without a compass as it would be for a man or woman to make any

headway on the sea of life without a purpose. Nobody ever drifts into anything desirable. To get the thing worth while you must know where your goal lies, and you must make straight for it, past all rocks and sandbars.

You cannot afford to go through life as a drifter or a leaner, borrowing other people's opinions, asking other people's advice, using their judgment, and never developing your own independence, your own good sense and practicality, any more than you can afford to let your pocket be picked by every passer-by. You literally cannot afford to miss a single opportunity for developing your confidence in, and reliance on, yourself.

Without a definite object in life, and the energy and will to attain it, one does not really live; he merely exists. When there is nothing to look forward to, to struggle for, life has lost its savor. It is work with a purpose that gives it dignity and meaning.

An all-absorbing worthy aim is as necessary to a full, rounded life as the character of Hamlet is to Shakespeare's great drama. It is the only thing that justifies our being. If we are



not here for some God-given purpose, to deliver some message of helpfulness to the world, to help carry out some splendid design, it were better not to be here at all.

We must either fling ourselves into our work with an unflinching determination to make it count for something, to lift it above commonness, weakness, or indifference, to go up stream at all costs, or we must resign ourselves to float down stream. Nothing can save us from failure but the mighty stimulus of a great aim and the resolute determination that no matter how long we may be delayed from its accomplishment, or how far we may be swerved aside by mistakes or iron circumstances, we shall never give up striving until our efforts shall be crowned with success.

There is one very important point in this connection which must not be overlooked. The ability to stand by one's purpose through thick and thin, through hard times and all sorts of discouragement, requires a great deal of that sort of staying power which depends no little on one's health. Physical vigor is in a certain sense the basis of all achievement. The dyspeptic, anæmic person is rarely self-reliant.

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You cannot afford to be a physical weakling any more than a mental weakling. A fine, strong, magnetic personality is the Creator's masterpiece.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE BACKBONE OF MANHOOD

A RECENT analysis of newspaper advertising shows that eighty-eight per cent. of it is honest and legitimate, and only twelve per cent. suspicious or dishonest. "If this twelve per cent. of illegitimate advertising were eliminated," says an advertising expert, "the newspapers would receive advertisements from most of the business men who do not now use their columns. The standard of newspaper advertising would be raised so that a newspaper advertisement would stamp an article as of high quality and would give the confidence to the public that is now produced by the word 'sterling' on silver or by the Government stamp on a banknote."

There is no other policy, to say nothing of the right or wrong of it, that compares with honesty and square dealing, whether in a newspaper, a business concern, or a man. There is nothing in this world that will take the place



of sterling honesty. A character above suspicion is the corner-stone of success.

In spite of, or because of, all the crookedness and dishonesty that is daily being uncovered, of all the scoundrels that are constantly being unmasked, integrity is the biggest word in the business world to-day. There never was a time in history when it was so big, and it is continually growing bigger. There never was a time when absolute honesty of character meant so much in business, when it stood for so much everywhere.

Character, as capital, is very much underestimated by most young men. They seem to put more emphasis on smartness, shrewdness, long-headedness, cunning, influence, a pull, than on downright honesty and integrity of character.

There was a time when in some places the man who was the shrewdest and sharpest, the most cunning in taking advantage of others, got the biggest salary. But to-day the man at the other end of the bargain is looming up as he never did before.

My opinion was recently sought regarding a young man under consideration for a very

important position. Knowing the young man in question only slightly, I called up his former employer, for whom he had worked a long time, and asked him what he could say for the young fellow. "He is every inch a man," was the quick reply, "and there is nothing more to say."

Nor did I want to know anything more. Such a recommendation from a careful, conservative man like my friend meant volumes. It meant he had the highest possible personal regard for his former employee and the greatest admiration for his ability. It meant that the young man was absolutely honest, that he could be trusted under any circumstances, with any responsibility. It meant not only that he would be loyal to his employer, but that he was able, that he had good judgment, that he was not likely to do foolish things or to make bad breaks. It meant that whoever employed this young man would not need to worry about his credit, or about the firm's progress during the proprietor's absence. It meant that he would watch its conduct and its reputation, that he would not throw away or imperil any opportunity for its advancement, that he would be a live, progressive, up-to-date, tireless worker.

After a young man has established a reputation for absolute integrity, for honesty and sincerity of purpose, when he is so thoroughly intrenched in the good opinion of his community that no one questions his motive, he has made a great start in life. The rest of the way will be comparatively easy.

A large part of the business of the world is based on reputation. Bankers make loans, or refuse them; jobbers give credit or refuse it, largely on a man's reputation. Is he reliable? Can you depend on his word? Will he do as he agrees? These are vital questions on which credit is based.

A well-known banker says: "Millions of dollars are loaned on character, for there are many men of such high standing, though poor in this world's goods, that they will not try to borrow more than they can repay."

Another banker says he would rather lend money to the honest poor man, than to the rich knave who gives substantial security.

I know two young business men who have very little property, but who have credit of a quarter of a million of dollars because their bankers believe in them. They bank on their



character and their ability to succeed more than upon the assets in sight. Their known honesty and their reputation as hustlers, indefatigable workers, is worth more to them as capital than many thousands of dollars in cash.

Ex-President Eliot of Harvard, says: "It is the judgment of your contemporaries that is most important to you. It is made up in part by persons to whom you have never spoken, by persons who in your view do not know you, and who get only a general impression of you; but always it is your contemporaries whose judgment is formidable and unavoidable."

During the Civil War, when General Lee was consulting one of his officers as to a certain movement of his army, a farmer's boy overheard the General remark that he had decided to march on Gettysburg instead of Harrisburg. The quick-witted boy at once telegraphed the fact to Governor Curtin. "I would give my right hand," said the Governor, "to know if this boy tells the truth." A corporal replied, "Governor, I know that boy. It is impossible for him to lie. There is not a drop of false blood in his veins." In fifteen

minutes the Union troops were marching toward Gettysburg. The world knows the result.

There is nothing like a clean record, the reputation of being square, absolutely reliable, to help a young man along. There is nothing comparable to truth as a man builder. Nothing else will do more toward your real advancement than the resolve, in starting out on your career, to make your word stand for something, always to tell the truth, whether it is to your immediate material interest or not. Truth and honesty make an impregnable foundation for a noble character.

Even when he was a poor, struggling young lawyer, Abraham Lincoln could never be induced to take the wrong side of a case. "I could not do it," he said. "All the time while talking to the jury I should be thinking, 'Lincoln, you're a liar, you're a liar,' and I believe I should forget myself and say it out loud."

The nickname of "Honest Abe" had a great deal to do with making him President of the United States. Everybody who knew him believed in him. They saw in him a deep, dead-in-earnestness, an absolute honesty and

straightforwardness of principle, from which nothing could swerve him. It was the unquestioned faith in his honesty that gave him such a hold on the hearts and minds of the people. Nothing could shake their confidence in him.

Truth is the natural utterance of the honest character. It is the voice of God himself. A man is impersonal when speaking the truth, when in the right. What he does or says is no longer a question of personality but of truth. We instinctively feel something beyond and above the man who speaks that is proclaiming the divine principle.

Why is it when one man in a community speaks, everybody listens, and believes what he says? Why does his word carry so much more weight than another man's? It is because there is character behind the word. Another man in the same community might say the same thing, and it would make no more impression on the public mind than water makes on a duck's back. Why? Because there is no principle behind the words, no reliability in the man back of the utterance.

We have examples of brilliant orators in every country who can hold audiences spell-



bound while they are talking, but whose word outside does not carry a bit of influence; people do not believe in them. They lack stability, reliability, sterling character.

It is always the character behind the man, behind the subject, back of the physician, the merchant, the lawyer, the business concern, that counts.

Not long since I asked a business man about the standing of a certain trust company. His reply was: "It is *money* good, but *man* bad." That is, the concern had not a real man behind it.

One of the greatest curses of modern times is the great fortune without a man behind it—the fortune of the man without character, without moral stamina.

Many men who control vast fortunes to-day would, but for their wealth, have no standing whatever in their communities. Those who know them have very little respect for them, personally. They are not nearly as strong morally, and do not rank as high mentally, as many of their employees. Whatever standing they have may be attributed to their money.

To amass a fortune and to spoil a man in the

process is pretty poor business. There is no more contemptible thing in the world than a dishonest, morally twisted, soul-starved man, standing beside a huge pile of dollars.

We have nothing to say against making money. That is necessary and desirable to a greater or less degree for all of us. It is making money at the expense of character that must be condemned as the greatest mistake in life.

"As a merchant he is a success, but as a man a failure." How often do we hear this said of a man; or "He is a great physician, [or a clever lawyer, a successful financier,] but as a man there is something lacking."

The trouble with many millionaires is that they were not men before they were bank presidents, trust company presidents, financiers. Their great lack is that they are paupers in character. No matter how prominent they may be when living, a few years after such men pass out of this life, they are entirely forgotten by the public. They never make a ripple on their time; they make no footprints which, "others seeing, take heart again."

Our love and our confidence are won by

character, not by wealth or skill. Our esteem is based on manhood, not on dollars.

Running through a list of genuinely great characters at random, we always find there is a strong backbone of purpose in them. We sense the temper of their manhood, the stamina of their character. Regardless of their vocations, we sense the great moral force in them, something which they consider more sacred than money-making, business considerations, or even life itself. When talking with them you feel they cannot be bought; they are not for sale. You know well that it would be useless to try to bribe or influence them, for they stand on the bedrock of principle as firm as the Rock of Gibraltar. Such characters are the salt of civilization.

Of such caliber was John Hancock, who, during the American War for Independence, without hesitation signed a document which he knew would take away his property and his home; but with him principle was greater than personal interest.

Some of the world's noblest characters have sacrificed their all for principle, and for its sake many have cheerfully gone to the stake and to the gallows.



Things are so planned in the moral universe that in order to get very far, or to accomplish very much in this world, a man has to be honest. The whole structure of natural law is really pledged to defeat the lie, the falsehood, the sham. Ultimately only the right can succeed, only truth can triumph. The whole lesson of life goes to show that no amount of smartness, brilliancy, scheming, long-headed cunning, can take the place of downright honesty, or be a substitute for personal integrity.

When Marshall Field was burned out in the great Chicago fire, when his store with all he possessed lay in ashes, eastern financiers telegraphed him to draw on them for what he wanted. The fire which destroyed Chicago could not burn up the reliability that stamped his character for square dealing. His name was a synonym of honesty.

When young Field, a poor farmer boy, began to build up what ultimately became the greatest merchandise concern in the world, he had no other capital than honesty. With this he started to do business in a legitimate way, without any chicanery, without cunning or deceit, without misrepresentation or falsehood of

any sort. He declined to have anything to do with questionable trade methods, or illegitimate "get rich quick" schemes. His ambition was to sell goods for the smallest possible profits, to cover nothing, to hide nothing. No one in his employ was permitted to misrepresent or to cover up anything. A clerk who misled a customer for the sake of making a sale was discharged, no matter how advantageous that particular sale might have been for the house.

Field knew that despite the profit made out of the transaction, a deceived or dissatisfied customer would be a perpetual enemy to his house, and would be a great injury to his business.

This was why customers flocked to buy at Marshall Field's store. They knew they would get a "square deal." They knew if there were anything wrong, if anything had been misrepresented by clerks, if for any reason they were dissatisfied with their purchases, the house would make it right, for that was the Marshall Field policy.

There is something about honesty of purpose, truthfulness and sincerity in our friendship, in our lives, in our vocations, in our dealings with others, that compensates for defi-



ciencies or lacks in other directions. Even though we have but one talent and fill a very humble station in life, integrity of character helps us upward, because it gives mental stability and public confidence, and without these success in any direction is impossible.

Just as honesty, not practiced for its own sake, but because it is a paying policy, is not a source of strength or moral stamina, so the negative policy, the practice of "don't" is not an indication of a sterling character.

Merely not doing wrong things does not make a strong character. Stalwart character is built up by action, by doing things; it is the product of a positive, not of a negative mentality. Mere negative virtues will never make a strong man or a strong woman. Letting things alone that are physically, morally, or mentally injurious, is merely incidental to the development of character.

A person may not have positive vices; he may never be guilty of anything absolutely wicked, and still he may have but a tithe of the active, sterling virtue of one who sometimes wanders from the straight and narrow path. He who faithfully practices "don't" may never



do a good or unselfish thing in all his life. He may be like the unfruitful servant whom his Lord condemned for burying his talent.

A correspondent once wrote me, "Some clergymen are so good that they are good-for-nothing. They insist so strenuously on the letter of the conventional side of morality and piety, and so emphasize the Christianity of 'don'ts,' don't do this and don't do that, that they do not carry much weight in their community." What we want is the stalwart Christianity that Christ taught, that expresses itself in action, in deeds, not merely in words.

How often we hear a parent boasting that his son does not use tobacco, does not drink, does not use profane language, and does not dissipate—in the ordinary sense of the term. But in spite of all these "don'ts," all these negative virtues, such boys are often the weakest sort of individuals.

There are multitudes of people who have no bad habits, and yet they do not amount to anything. They are flat, insipid, flavorless; they carry no weight. They are too negative to make an impression anywhere.

Men who amount to something morally, who

stand out distinctively, have force of character, a strong, positive individuality. This can only be gained by persistent, vigorous doing of the right, not merely by refraining from doing the wrong. It is the positive virtues, the vigorous doing of right things, the standing up for principle, in spite of opposition, that makes forceful character. Positive, not negative righteousness is what counts. A negative character may be virtuous, but it cannot be strong.

It is of the greatest importance that a man who has no capital, except what is inside of himself, should early establish a reputation for having certain winning qualities. Until he has done this, no matter how brilliant he may be, he is at a disadvantage. When he has shown that he is honest and reliable, that he has principles and proposes to live up to them, when he has shown that he has courage, grit, pluck, and that he is not afraid to fight for truth and justice; when he has proved that he thinks more of always being found on the right side of any question than on the winning side, then he will get people's confidence and admiration.

To have backbone as well as a clean record is worth everything to a young man starting out for himself. Not to have any smirch or spot on his character, but to make every transaction so clean it will never be questioned, that there will be no chance for reflection against him, is worth more than any inherited fortune. What a boon later in life to look back on a past clean and unbroken by even a breath of suspicion!

In Norway they speak of the Saviour as "the white Christ." After Longfellow's visit to that country, during which he had so endeared himself to the people by his genuineness, his transparent honesty and uprightness of character, they always spoke of him as "the white Mr. Longfellow."

Is there anything grander, can there be a truer indication of success, than the reputation among those who know us best of being a "white man"?



## CHAPTER XII

### “SHRINKING FROM THE DISAGREEABLE”

“Do the hardest thing first,” is the motto hanging above the desk of a very successful business man. This man has told me that that single short sentence has wrought a revolution in his life. “One day I suddenly realized,” he said, “that I had fallen into the habit of putting off unpleasant duties and evading disagreeable or difficult tasks, until the ghosts of them blocked my path at every turn. I put up that motto where I could not help seeing it, and set myself to bring each day’s work in line with it. The first day I began on the duties I had kept pushing aside, the long-deferred, long over-due tasks, that had been put out of sight in favor of the easy, pleasant things. When at length I had cleared my path, I made it a rule to begin each morning at the biggest, toughest job in the whole day’s work before me. I gave my freshest efforts to the kind of

work I had previously put off the longest, and before a great while I found that what used to loom up before me like a mountain of difficulty, when handled with energy and determination, was really very simple and comparatively easy. It is to the forming of this habit to do the hardest thing first, more than to anything else, that I owe what is called my success.”

A great many people fail in life for no other reason than that they shrink from doing the hard, disagreeable things. They pick out the things they like, the easy things first, and leave the disagreeable, difficult tasks until the last. In the meantime they are tortured with anticipation of the drudgery to come later. They do not seem to realize that this anticipating, dreading work is fatal to efficiency, and cuts off the largest percentage of one's power. The consciousness that there is always some disagreeable thing ahead, waiting to be done, affects the disposition and makes one fractious and irritable. The mind is also injuriously affected. It loses its elasticity, its freshness and buoyancy.

The great failure army is filled with men



and women who from their youth up shrank from all the difficult or unpleasant tasks in life. It is as foolish to do this as it would be to shrink from all physical exercise, from using our muscles and faculties. It is only by use, by effort, by exertion, that we grow. In the last analysis, experience is our only asset.

Doing the hardest thing first does not mean that it is always possible or advisable to pick out the difficult things in our work and do them out of their order. It simply means that one should not skip the hard things,—put them off when it is time to do them. Every hour we postpone only makes it more and more difficult to get up courage to tackle them.

The man who goes through life picking the flowers and avoiding the thorns in his occupation, always doing the easy thing first and delaying or putting off altogether, if possible, the hard things, weakens his character so that he does not develop the strength that will enable him to do the hard things when they are actually forced upon him.

Only recently a prominent public man was criticised throughout the newspaper world as one not having enough character to keep his



promises. He had not the stamina to make good when to do so proved difficult. He hadn't the timber, the character fiber to stand up and do the thing he knew to be right, and that he had promised to do. The world is full of these jelly-fish people who have not lime enough in their backbone to stand erect, to do the right thing. They are always stepping into the spotlight in the good-intention stage, and then, when the reckoning time comes, taking the line of least resistance, doing the thing which will cost the least effort or money, regardless of later consequences. They think they can be as unscrupulous about breaking promises as they were about making them. But sooner or later fate makes us play fair or get out of the game.

I know a man who has formed the unfortunate habit of picturing to himself the agreeable and the disagreeable side of things, and of following whenever it is possible the agreeable side, regardless of whether it is the right or the wrong course to pursue. The result is the man has no character or stamina. He is pleasant and agreeable, but lacks vigor, and has never accomplished anything worth while. His life

has been a busy but an unprofitable one. Everything he has done has been characterless. I knew him as a boy at school, and what he was then he is now. He always skipped the hard problems at school, and he has been skipping them ever since. As a consequence, he has practically no standing in his community. No one would think of looking to him for aid in an emergency.

Why is it that so many people who are ambitious to get on in the world and to make the most possible of themselves should shrink from the discipline, the training which is absolutely necessary to enable them to get the most out of their lives? Just because things are distasteful to them, or require much effort or constant application, they shrink from them.

One would think that a youth who starts out with a vigorous resolution to make the most out of the material given him and to reach the highest possible round in life's ladder, would firmly resolve never to forego any experience, to omit any discipline or training or opportunity which could help him along or advance his interests. Instead, however, on every hand we see young men playing with the spoon, putting off taking

their medicine, because it is disagreeable. They know it will help them, but they dread taking it.

Now, the only way to grow, to become strong and vigorous, the only way to get that training and discipline which will give character, firm fiber and stalwart resisting timber, is to take your medicine without hesitation. A disagreeable draught will not be nearly so nauseous if taken quickly.

Everything depends upon the attitude of mind with which you approach a difficulty. If you cower before you begin, and show that you do not feel equal to the undertaking, you are foredoomed to failure. There is no obstacle so great that there is not some way by which it can be overcome. The imagination is apt to conjure up all sorts of difficulties which you will never experience. Ask yourself if the thing confronting you ought to be done; if it will help you; if it will make you a stronger, better man or woman. If it will, jump in and do it.

Many people are weak simply because they are always trying to avoid disagreeable things, or that which might make them anxious or uncomfortable in the doing or beforehand. Their



characters are consequently flabby, their wills weak, and they haven't the backbone of a jelly-fish.

How many people have suffered with toothache for years, just because they dreaded to have a diseased tooth extracted! Of course they knew that the pain would be over in a few seconds, but they could not bear to think of going through the disagreeable experience, and put it off until absolutely compelled to suffer it.

Hundreds of people have lost their lives postponing surgical operations until it was too late. Blood poisoning or other complications set in, and it had become too dangerous to risk an operation. There are many people who would rather have an arm amputated five years hence than a finger to-day. Anything to escape the suffering of the present.

What a lot of mental pain we endure in dreading disagreeable tasks, which we postpone and postpone until it seems almost impossible to do them!

All these evaded, dreaded ghosts are continually bobbing up to mar our pleasure. We cannot have a good time. We do not enjoy

the holiday because this disagreeable, postponed thing keeps intruding on our attention and reproving us for not attending to it.

The man who gets into the habit of pitying himself, coddling himself, favoring himself, whenever he feels a little off, the man who finds every exertion is an effort, will never make much of a dent anywhere. The candidate for success must take himself in hand and train himself, just as he would train a child or a pupil. He must keep himself up to standard. No matter whether he feels like it or not, he must jack himself up, whip himself into line until he does feel like it, and compel himself to do a square, reasonable day's work, unless he is positively ill.

It is a great thing early in life to form a habit of conquering the thing that is going to be good for us, doing the thing, however disagreeable, however unpleasant, that will help us carry out our ambition, that will help us grow.

How many people would like health! They know it is the very foundation of happiness, but they are not willing to practice self-denial to put themselves under the proper régime, to

form habits which will promote health, which will build a robust constitution. They will not exert themselves to take needed exercise in the gymnasium or out-of-doors. It is too much trouble. They want to do the things they like, to eat and drink the things that taste good, no matter whether they are best fitted for their constitution or not. The result is that the great majority of people go through life with indifferent or poor health, instead of the robust, vigorous health which they might have if they were willing to pay the price in right exercise and life habits.

Thousands of young people want an education, but they are not willing to take the trouble to acquire it; they are not willing to forego their little pleasures with their associates. They would get an education if there were some short cut to it, if they could get it at a bargain, but to take the ordinary route, the hard road of close application and much self-denial is out of the question. They cannot bear the pain of that. There is not enough liberty in it; they want their freedom.

Many of them know that the training and drilling would be good for them, but they do



not want to give up their comforts, to make the sacrifice, to pay their way through school or college. They prefer to do no more hard work than they are compelled to, and to get as much assistance as possible. But this is not the kind of an education that counts; this is not facing life the right way, in the right spirit; this will not make the sort of man or woman the world needs.

On every hand we see hesitating, delaying, procrastinating people kept back because they are not willing to pay the price of advancement in downright honest hard work and self-denial. It is only occasionally we see boys and girls who are willing to work hard and persistently for an education and life training, who are enthusiastic and whole-hearted in their endeavor, who fling their lives into their training, and do not accept discipline like a slave that has to be whipped to his task.

Most of us are too indolent, too selfish, to forego our comforts and pleasures. We would rather take inferior products at cost of the least effort. The result is that most of us only achieve our second or third best.

What if engineers had advised against

building a railroad to the Pacific coast because of the great American desert, the alkaline plains, the Rocky and the Sierra Nevada Mountains? A civil engineer must be a man who will not stop for rivers or mountains, who can bridge Niagara or the Mississippi or tunnel the Rocky Mountains.

The success engineer must also be willing to cross the Alps in winter, to tunnel mountains of difficulties and to bridge all sorts of streams which would deter weaker souls. A large number in the failure army are on the banks of rivers which they have not grit or pluck to cross, or at the foot of mountains which they think they cannot tunnel or climb.

One reason why the great majority of people are, even late in life, still far from their goal is that, they have not taken a straight path to it. They have followed all sorts of circuitous routes, winding through valleys, side-stepping here and there to avoid obstacles, instead of fording the rivers or tunneling straight through the mountains in their path.

The bold man, the strong, vigorous character, like the expert engineer, goes straight to his goal, while the weak, timid, spineless per-

son, who shrinks from the disagreeable, who cannot bear to sacrifice his comforts, who is afraid of obstacles, takes the long, circuitous route, and if he ever arrives at his goal arrives too late in life to get the best out of his achievement.

If those who are disappointed with what they have so far accomplished, would only make up their minds that for one month they would force themselves to do the things they dislike, but which they know would be for their good, they would get a new start on the success road, a firmer grip on themselves and their possibilities. Their whole system would feel the resultant tonic.

Men who are success organized seldom talk about difficulties, or ask whether a thing lying straight before them on the road to success is hard or easy. The goal is the only thing they keep in sight, and obstacles or no obstacles, agreeable or disagreeable, they walk straight to it.

There is only one way to handle a nettle, and that is to crush it vigorously and quickly in your hand, robbing it of its sting at once. The application of this principle to the doing of dis-



agreeable things robs them also of their sting, and the doer gets a very real satisfaction, a feeling of power, a tonic from the sense of conquest, the ability to grapple with difficult problems vigorously and to get them out of the way with dispatch.

“He who defers an unpleasant duty in reality does it twice. Anticipation of it may become a continued torture.”

When Henry Ward Beecher was asked how he managed to accomplish so much with so little friction, he replied, “By never doing my work twice.”

Many do their tasks a dozen times over in anticipation and useless anxiety. They waste as much energy in thinking about them in advance, dreading them, wondering how they are going to turn out, as they would expend in their performance.

Under every clock in a factory at Cleveland, Ohio, is the motto, “Do it now!” Such a motto, lived up to by every one, would spare the world much trouble. It would add thousands of good deeds to daily happenings, save many firms from bankruptcy through bad debts, paint hundreds of pictures now only

dreamed of, write books without number and straighten out half the tangles of our complicated social life. The habit of putting off disagreeable duties is responsible for much needless unhappiness, for these bugbears weigh on the mind and prevent the satisfaction and content that comes from duty well performed. Most tasks promptly undertaken prove less difficult than we anticipated, and the joy of accomplishment often compensates for any hardship experienced.

The pavement of the road to a very uncomfortable place is said to be composed of good intentions. Nowhere else has this material been tried for paving, though it is plentiful enough to use for almost any purpose. We all know people whose houses burn when they are “just going to” insure; who lose a cow or a horse when they are “just going to” mend the fence or close the gate; who are “just going to” buy stock, when it goes up like a rocket; who are “just going to” pay a note, when it goes to protest; who are “just going to” help a neighbor, when he dies; who are “just going to” send some flowers to a sick friend, when it proves too late; in fact, they are “just going to” do

things all their lives, but never get started.

It is very pleasant to slide along the line of least resistance, to take things easy, and not feel obliged to exert one's self too strenuously, but one never gets anywhere by adopting such a policy.

The habit of taking things easy is as insidious as the opium habit, the drug habit, or the drink habit. If you cannot overcome your natural inertia or acquired laziness, you may be sure you will never get beyond mediocrity, and may be a total failure.

The man who does things is ever master of himself, of his moods. He never stops to consider whether he feels like doing a thing or not. The only question he asks is whether it is the best thing to do, and if it is he will make himself do it.

If I were just starting out again in active life and wanted to make the most of myself, I would resolve to do whatever would promote my growth, whatever would make me a larger, broader and stronger man, regardless of whether it was pleasant or unpleasant, agreeable or disagreeable, convenient or inconvenient. *Growth would be my goal*, and I would



sacrifice my comfort, leisure, good times—anything—to accomplish that one end.

If, as a young man, I were invited to speak on a public occasion—at a school meeting, before a debating club or a political gathering, I would never let the chance slip. I would seize it as a precious opportunity to grow a bit more, to make myself a little larger. Most young men shrink from speaking before an audience because they are so sensitive, so afraid that they may not do well, and they make excuses for the time being, thinking they will surely avail themselves of the next opportunity. But the same dread of the public gaze seizes them the next time, and they refuse and lose their chance to improve just as they did before.

If I were a young man and were asked to serve on a committee, a board of directors or trustees, or on a school board, a village improvement society, or any other kind of an organization, I would accept the invitation and commit myself quickly lest I should become panic-stricken upon thinking it over and decline. I would not give myself a chance to argue both sides of the question and to think

that I might make a fool of myself in such a position. I would seize the opportunity and I would do my best. In other words, I would make it a rule to accept the best things that came to me and then I would make myself equal to the occasion.

Do not hesitate, vacillate, dally with the opportunity, emergency, danger, duty—whichever it may be. The marked and increasing tendency to do this, to take a long time to choose, to decide, to act, is known to psychologists as a characteristic of approaching senility, and also of paranoia. If you knew that a certain appearance of your skin indicated a tendency to some particularly loathsome disease, such as leprosy, or to some phase of gangrene, would you not immediately take steps to eradicate it? When you find yourself hesitating, half deciding, and then undeciding, dallying, playing with the spoon long past the hour when the dose was due, cut it out as you would a plague spot and drill yourself into the habit of acting in a clear-cut, unfaltering way, of deciding squarely and acting promptly. The habit of postponing a dreaded duty has wrecked many a life.

There is no merit in doing a thing when its doing is inevitable, and little moral or character value in the effect of such action on the actor. The meanest rat will fight when it is cornered. Fear or force will appeal to the lowest natures. The hero fights in courage, not in fear, knowing that “the right and one make a majority,” in any contest.

The daily problems of life make no mean battlefield of endeavor, and when the true history of mankind is inscribed on the scroll of the ages, the heroes of the workaday world will rank higher perhaps than any victor in war.

The habit of being a quitter before the battle begins is fatal to all distinctiveness. It is a death blow to the development of originality and strength of character, without which no man can be a leader; he must remain a trailer; he must always follow some one else's lead.

If you are trying to get a start in the world, but do not feel able to remove the many barriers that block your way, do not get discouraged. The obstacles that look so formidable at a distance will grow smaller and smaller as you approach. Have courage and confidence enough in yourself to keep forging ahead, and



the road will clear before you as you advance. Read the life stories of men who from the start have cleared their pathway of obstructions which make yours look puny. Magnify your faith in yourself and you will minimize the obstacles in your way.

Look at the remarkable things ahead of you, the things you are ambitious to win, through the big end of your mental telescope, and when looking at your obstructions, turn the lens and they will not only look pretty small, but a long way off. Magnify your possibilities, minimize your difficulties, let your staff be courage and your guide self-confidence, and, no matter what obstacles bar the way, you will reach your goal.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE KINGSHIP OF SELF-CONTROL

“IN the supremacy of self-control consists one of the perfections of the ideal man,” says Herbert Spencer.

One of the worst results of uncontrolled passion is that the isolated act of one man or woman who has never acquired the power of self-control, often plunges a whole family, sometimes several families, an entire community, or a whole nation, into an abyss of misery.

The lack of self-control has strewn history with wrecks of its victims; it has ruined millions of ambitious men of rare ability and great promise.

Every day the newspapers in every quarter of the globe record tragedies that have been enacted when the blood was hot with anger or jealousy.

Ask the wretched victims in our penitentiaries what the loss of self-control, for perhaps only a moment, has cost them. How

many of these unfortunates have lost their liberty for one fit of hot temper! The fatal blow was struck, the cruel shot fired, but the soul returned never and the consequences were eternal.

We all know how hard it is to control our feelings and our words at the moment when the blood runs hot through the frenzied brain, but we also know how dangerous, how fatal it is, to allow ourselves to become slaves to temper. It is not only ruinous to the disposition, and crippling to efficiency, but it is also humiliating in the last degree to have to acknowledge that one is not one's own master.

A child learns by experience to avoid touching hot things that will burn him, or sharp things that will cut him, but many adults never learn to avoid the hot temper which sears, the sharp word which implants a sting that never dies.

The man who cannot control himself is like a mariner without a compass; he is at the mercy of every wind that blows. Every storm of passion, every wave of irresponsible thought buffets him hither and thither, drives him out of his course, and makes it well-nigh impossible



for him ever to reach the goal of his desires.

"Prove to me," says Mrs. Oliphant, "that you can control yourself, and I'll say you're an educated man; but without this, all other education is good for next to nothing."

The truth of this was well illustrated in the case of a distinguished scholar, a college professor, who suffered a term of imprisonment for an act committed in a storm of anger. All his learning, all his fine theories of conduct and the dignity of manhood were blown to the winds in a moment of uncontrolled passion.

What a humiliation for this man, for any man, to be conscious that in an instant, perhaps without a moment's warning, he may not be able to prove himself a man at all, to have any control over his acts, that he may be absolutely in the possession of a passion demon!

Fortunately for this college professor, however, his suffering proved his salvation, and enabled him to complete his education by strengthening the fatal defect in his character.

On his release from prison he was restored to his former position. The students who knew him gathered in his classroom, expecting that on his return their old hot-tempered

professor would have something vigorous to say about his unfortunate experience. But instead, he merely took up the thread of his lecture where he had left off at the time of his arrest, with the words, "As I was saying."—In those sad years, during which he had had ample time for reflection, he had learned the supreme lesson of self-mastery.

It is a great triumph to be able to control ourselves, to keep within the bounds of our reasoned resolution, even in the presence of the temptations which appeal most strongly to our weak points, the points where we are most vulnerable. There is always one weak spot in all human armor, one point where the sword thrust of the enemy is most likely to wound. If we can achieve the mastery of this, we are victors indeed. But lacking this, we are at any moment subject to failure.

One does not touch real power until he attains self-mastery, not only until he can control his passions, but until he can also dominate his environment, be greater than his surroundings.

"He that reigns within himself," says Milton, "and rules his passions, his desires, and fears, is more than a king."

Think what it means to have obtained such complete self-mastery that you do not tremble in face of danger, that you remain unmoved amid temptations, that you do not shrink when poverty shakes her skeleton wand at you, when trials and difficulties crowd upon you, when, in short, nothing can touch that serene self-poise which characterized the God-man, the Christ in all the storms of life!

But how can one attain such serenity, such marvelous self-poise? Simply by mastering the secret of right thinking. The man who has once learned to control his thought forces, knows that true self-mastery becomes a matter of course. He knows how to protect himself from his mental enemies as well as his physical ones. He knows, for instance, that when the brain is in danger of a passion fire, it will not do to add more fuel to fan the flame by storming and raging, but will quietly put out the fire by applying an antidote,—the serenity thought, the thought of peace and good to all.

If your great weakness is to storm and rage on the slightest provocation, if you “fly all to pieces” over the least annoyance, do not waste your time regretting this weakness, and tell-



ing everybody that you cannot help it. Take exactly the opposite course. Do not speak of your failing at all. Follow Shakespeare's injunction and "assume a virtue if you have it not." Deliberately, continually assume the calm, balanced composure which characterizes your ideal person. Try to persuade yourself by the constant, quiet, but firm assurance that instead of being hot-tempered, nervous, or excitable, you are really calm, serene, and well balanced, that you do not fly off at a tangent at every little annoyance, but that you can control yourself perfectly. In a little while you will be surprised to find how the perpetual holding of this attitude will mold you to your thought, will help you to grow into the very image of your state of mind. All we are, or have been, or ever will be, comes from the quality and force of our thinking.

People who lack self-control say, of course, that they cannot help losing their tempers. This is about as sensible as it would be for a man to say that he could not help letting his money pour out of a hole in his pocket, that he did not know how to sew up the hole. Any one who is willing to pay the price, to make the

effort required to gain the victory over self will succeed. But it will not be an easy task, for no foeman we shall ever meet will put up a stronger fight than the passions that tempt and hinder, and often overwhelm us. Yet any normal person can obtain command over any aggregation of mental weaknesses if the desire for conquest that thrills the soul is real, and is backed by earnest and persistent effort.

We are the victims of our thoughts because we are willing to be subject to them, for no mental influence short of actual monomania is so strong that we cannot resist it, or eventually send it flying, by the exertion of the right sort of determination. It is only the man with feeble mental muscles who cannot command the forces of his mind.

Take a bad temper, for example. This is often the result of false pride, selfishness, or cheap vanity, and no man or woman is worthy the name who continues to be governed by it. There is nothing manly or womanly or noble in the quality that lets loose the "dogs of war," which in an instant may make enemies of friends, ruin a home, or bring shame and disgrace on oneself and one's family.

A man recently sued for divorce on the ground of his wife's quick temper. He said she would fly into a rage, and bite, scratch, and kick on the slightest provocation, sometimes without any at all. She was all right, excepting for this uncontrolled temper, which, however, marred her whole character. Probably, when a child, this woman's passions were hot but short lived, and could then have been easily corrected. But, gathering strength with every occasion of expression, they at length mastered her and wrecked her life. It is pitifully true that when a child is on fire with passion, many of us often, instead of quenching the flame, add fuel to it by losing our own temper. What misery, what crime, what untold suffering might be prevented by training children to self-control, by directing their thought into proper channels, and teaching them at the outset the secret of self-mastery.

How deplorable it is to see a man designed by nature to dominate his environment, a man with great natural ability, who might have been trained to be king of himself, so absolutely at the mercy of a bad temper that he goes all to pieces over a mistake some clerk has made,



or who actually cannot tell whether in attempting to settle a difficulty or solve a knotty business problem he can control himself and be a man until his task is completed. How pitiable to see a naturally strong and lovely woman utterly losing her self-command in some petty dispute with her cook, or maid; or going into a storm of temper about some little detail of dress, or other triviality hardly worth a moment's thought.

Many of us seem to lack even the basic elements of self-control. We are annoyed by trifles and give way to petty troubles without any effort at self-control. The splutter of a pen, a bump on the shin, a stubbed toe, brings forth an explosion of temper out of all proportion to the thing that caused it.

"He that is slow to anger," says Solomon, "is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." But how often do we hear the remark, "He is an able man and a hard worker, but he can't control himself, his temper gets away with him over trifles," or "She is a splendid woman; she has great talent and possibilities, but her hot temper is always making trouble for herself and for others, too."

It may seem a very far cry from such trivialities to the great catastrophes of life, but to my mind the highest courage, the finest and most complete self-mastery are no more than the result of the habit of control and steadiness in the small things of life. The man or woman who meets the little things calmly will be prepared for the more serious or the unexpected, and will ultimately, through force of habit, attain that sublime order of courage, poise, self-mastery, which even the greatest calamity cannot shake. And though his highest courage may never be put to the test, the one who has habituated himself to self-control in little things will have gained the strength of character that will make him a person of mark in every situation of life.

He who has mastered himself, who is his own Cæsar, will be stronger than his passion, superior to circumstances, higher than his calling, greater than his speech.

Self-mastery does not consist merely in being able to control one's temper and emotions. It is a much broader and more comprehensive thing than that. It means that when the test comes, a man is able to call to his aid every bit

of strength and intelligence, every atom of strength and resourcefulness, every power of mind and body with which the Creator has endowed him.

What does a man say; what does he do when a great crisis stares him in the face, when a thing must be done which seems "impossible" to others? This will be the test of his caliber, of his mastery of self. If he does not become panicky and lose his head; if he presses on when others are abandoning their efforts; if a tremendous power out of the great within of his soul reënforces him when he confronts the "impossible," then we know he is king of himself. We know that he is made of the stuff that wins, the stuff that works miracles, because he has absolute control, not only of himself, but also of outward conditions and circumstances.

The man who has not learned to control his temper or to resist his appetite, who is the victim of the slightest temptation or impulse, who is led by feeling, emotion, and not by the steady light of principle, will never make a leader of men, for he cannot lead himself.

I know a very able writer who has occupied splendid positions on the best and greatest



dailies in the country. He is a forceful, virile writer on a great variety of subjects, a fine historian, and a warm, tender-hearted man, who will do anything for any one in need. Yet he is almost a total failure in life because of his explosive temper. He does not hesitate in the heat of a moment's anger, to walk out of a position which it has taken him years to get. This man is conscious of great ability, yet he has drifted from pillar to post, hardly able to support his family, going through life with the humiliating knowledge that he is the slave of a bad temper.

Think of the thousands of men who ruin themselves and drag their families down to poverty and degradation because they allow themselves to become the slaves of alcohol! They become drunkards, perhaps by yielding to the first temptation "to take a drink." Though they knew the danger of yielding, they did not exert the little self-control needed at the outset to keep and strengthen the mastery of the appetite for drink.

Is there a sadder thing in the world than to see a man lose a good position, perhaps sacrifice the opportunity of a lifetime, in a fit of bad

temper or a drunken debauch! It is as if a king should put a puppet on his throne and should himself become a servant and do the bidding of the puppet.

Think of being handicapped at every turn, of one's whole life being marred, simply because one cannot, or rather will not, control his temper or his appetite!

Men often excuse themselves for the lack of self-control on the ground that their passions are so strong. But the Creator never left any human being at the mercy of his passions. The strength to conquer is always equal to that of the temptation or passion. It is, in the beginning at least, merely a question of exercising the will.

According to Zopyrus, the physiognomist, Socrates' features showed that he was stupid, brutal, sensual, and addicted to drunkenness. Socrates himself upheld this statement. "By nature," he said, "I am addicted to all these sins, and they are only restrained and vanquished by the continual practice of virtue."

Mirabeau, when speaking at Marseilles during one of the greatest political crises in France, was called "calumniator, liar, assassin,

scoundrel." The great Frenchman's only reply to these abusive epithets was, "I wait, gentlemen, till these amenities be exhausted."

In Revelations, the inspired writer refers to the final conquerors as those who have triumphed over the beast. Each of us has a beast within that we must master before we can lay claim to self-ownership, not to speak of self-mastery. No one can be master of himself while he is the slave of any of his passions, any weakness or failing, no matter how trifling.

A rat hole in a dam may be the cause of submerging a great city. A single lighted match may start a fire that will devastate a countryside. A moment of hot temper may destroy the work of a lifetime. One weak spot in a man's character, a fit of drunkenness or a night's debauch may undo the hard work of years. How many beautiful friendships are shattered in a moment of unguarded passion, or by the writing of a hasty letter while smarting under some imaginary slight or insult!

Nearly all of the tragedies of life are caused by the lack of self-mastery. If we could so control ourselves as to think for a moment before giving way to passion, before uttering the



passionate word or writing the hasty letter, how much suffering and sorrow could we avert!

A friend recently told me that he never felt so grateful for anything in his life as having delayed over night the mailing of a scathing letter which he had written in great anger. The next morning he thought he would break the seal and read the letter once more before mailing. He said it did not seem possible when his passion had died down that he could ever have written such a letter. And of course it was never sent to the person for whom it was intended.

If you are ever tempted to write a letter of that sort, keep it over night and read it again in the morning before mailing it. How many people would give anything they possess if they could recall the letter they write and mail in anger. It would be better still, if we could control ourselves to the point of never even writing it. To give no expression whatever to a passion is the surest way to kill it. If passions, great or small, are continually suppressed they will atrophy, die from lack of expression.

An Irishman said that he could resist everything but temptation; that other things didn't bother him, but this thing of temptation was a little too much for him. Doubtless, most of us feel, under all circumstances, about as this man did.

Only a few great souls here and there obtain complete dominion over themselves, and stand out like beacon lights in the history of the race. Some of us get possession of a little of ourselves. We conquer a small portion of territory here and there in our vast physical and mental domain, but the greater part of ourselves we never conquer. The power that should preside at the helm is not always and everywhere master. There are insurrections here and there all through the kingdom, unruly passions which dispute the mastery with the one who should be king. Too often they have their way and win the victory.

Yet any one who wills may be king of himself. The Creator has designed us for self-dominion. Any one who knows how to think, who is normal, can strengthen or build up any faculty at will. He can strengthen every weak point and eliminate every failing that holds him back.

The first thing to do is to bring ourselves into the right mental attitude, to acquire and to hold persistently the attitude of mastery, of dominance. We cannot do everything in a day; but we can each day, by little and little, by steady application, gain control of the hasty temper, or the temptation to indulge in any particular weakness that handicaps us, until we become masters, not playthings, of our will.

It is an assistance sometimes to the attainment of self-mastery to objectify the obstacles in our path. Often when we see their comparative smallness it encourages us to persevere in overcoming them. For instance, a friend of mine realized that his excessive use of tobacco was injuring his health, yet he found it difficult to break the habit. He kept remembering that it was a lifelong one and that it would be very hard for him to break away from it. Finally one day he gathered all his tobacco together, and placing it before him, he said: "Now I am a man and you are a weed, which is going to win in this fight?" The weed understood—and so did the man.

Another who was the victim of a violent temper kept this Bible text constantly in mind,



and made a habit of repeating it when he felt his passion rising—"Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry; for anger resteth in the bosom of fools." In a comparatively short time he conquered his fault.

No one need be "passion's slave" unless he chooses to be. Any one who is willing to pay the price may be king of himself.

People who are miserable and inefficient are so chiefly because they are not masters in their mental realm. They fling open the doors of their mind and admit all sorts of conflicting mental currents which bring discord, meanness, hatred, and jealousy. Pandemonium reigns throughout their mental kingdom, and then they wonder why they are unhappy and impotent. It never seems to occur to them that it is because they do not control their thoughts, because they allow the enemies of their peace and welfare to etch their hideous images upon the walls of their mind, to make a menagerie of their mental kingdom instead of keeping it as a temple, dedicated only to the use of the highest and most sacred things in their nature.

## CHAPTER XIV

### AN HOUR A DAY

DID you ever realize that all you get out of life, all that it means to you, all of your success and happiness must come right out of the present instant; that you can never live a second before or a second after? It is only in the present moment you live, and all you do, all you achieve must come right out of that moment.

No one has ever yet been able to get into the future by even the fraction of a second. No one can ever get into the past by a fraction of a second.

When we consider that the really creative part of our lives is reduced to a comparatively short time—a very few hours a day for a few years—we get some idea of the preciousness of those hours.

“Time is money” is one of the great maxims of commercial success. Likewise time is edu-

cation, knowledge, and knowledge is power. "Take care of the seconds and the hours will take care of themselves," is just as true as "take care of the pennies and the pounds will take care of themselves." How many people realize that the aggregate time wasted, frittered away, would equip the mind for a profession, would lift one from a life of limitations to a life of practically unlimited advancement?

Multitudes of people have a vague idea that they will in some way make their life worth while. They have no intention of throwing it away or making it cheap or common. In a general sort of way they expect to accomplish some great thing, but very few realize that if the life is to be successful every day must be a success, must be devoted to something worth while. An indefinite ambition to live a noble life, to achieve great things, will not accomplish anything. The life program that is not planned in detail and adhered to rigidly, heroically, usually dwindles away in general deterioration.

Our accomplishment cannot exceed the sum of the achievement of all our days and moments. No matter what investment you may



make in life, there is no other so satisfactory as the investment of those days and moments in growth, the coining of bits of leisure into knowledge and power.

The more money one saves, the nearer he comes to being independent. The more you know, the nearer you are to the possession of power. Every bit of knowledge you acquire enlarges and enriches your life by just so much. Every little self-investment makes you so much better off, so much larger and fuller, and just so much better able to cope with life.

I wish it were possible to blazon on the sky, where it would burn itself into the consciousness of every youth, the marvelous results of even one hour a day spent in persistent, concentrated, earnest self-culture.

What young man is really too busy to give an hour a day to self-improvement, self-enlargement? One hour a day for a short time profitably employed would enable men of ordinary capacity to master a complete science. One hour a day in ten years would make an ignorant man a well-informed man. In an hour a day a boy or girl could read twenty

pages thoughtfully—more than seven thousand pages in a year, or eighteen large volumes. An hour a day might make—nay—has made—an unknown man famous, a useless man a benefactor to his race. Think of the mighty possibilities of two—four—yes, even six hours a day that are often thrown away by young men and women in frivolous amusement!

Thousands of young men in England who had great admiration for Gladstone, who looked on him as fortune's favorite,—a wonderfully "lucky" man,—did not realize that one great secret of his success was to be found in his indefatigable use of time. What wealth, what untold riches lived in fragments of time for this man who, though next to the queen in directing the destinies of a mighty nation, would never allow himself to be without a book or a paper in his pocket, lest some precious moments might slip away from him unimproved! What would he not have given for the thousands of days the Englishmen who envied him threw away!

Who ever has gained a prize in life who valued his time lightly? Hours are not merely

golden,—not so cheap as that! They are infinitely more precious than gold. Their value is but faintly typified by the most precious of gems.

Everywhere we hear people saying they would do this or that if they only had the ability, if they were only talented; and they excuse their mediocre lives, their years of inactivity, just because they haven't what they call genius. These very people do not use a tithe of the ability they do have, and they waste their time, as well. They make a habit of wasting, and had greater gifts been bestowed on them, these, too, would doubtless have been squandered in the same way.

Of all the habits that can be formed in youth none will prove more helpful in after years than that of utilizing in self-improvement spare time which would otherwise be thrown away. If the habit is strongly entrenched in the nature of the youth before going out from the influence of the home, it will steady him, strengthen his power, and keep him from yielding to the thousand and one temptations which beset him when he starts out to fight his own way in the world.



One of the most unfortunate defects in the average home, especially where there are large families, is the insidious habit of wasting time. The average family, after dinner, gathers in the living-room and spends most of the evening in conversation, which, usually, is not of the slightest importance. It may be a constant stream of slang, or of silly jokes, with no real wit, mere talk, which affords little or no exercise to the mind. Some of the children, perhaps, want to play, and some to read. They have no program. They hardly know what they will do, and so they merely waste an enormous amount of one another's time in foolishness.

In how many homes is evening after evening dissipated in this fashion? No one learns anything; nothing useful is accomplished. The time is literally lost. It is not even spent in wholesome recreation.

Yet in every family there is at least one boy or girl who would like to rise above mediocrity and be something in the world. But what are the probabilities that this ambitious one can improve himself by a systematic course of reading or study in an environment where the

whole atmosphere discourages it? Unless his ambition and determination are unusually strong, the chances are the child will become discouraged and eventually will drift with the others.

There is, now and then, a young person with such towering ambition and unflinching determination to get on that nothing can stand in his way. He does not seem to require encouragement. He will get in a corner and study, no matter if bedlam reigns all around him, but most boys and girls with only ordinary ambition, who might do something well worth while if they received proper encouragement and were surrounded with a stimulating, inspiring atmosphere, will not push themselves out of the conditions which hold them back. They gradually drift into the general habit of the family and "have a good time." Although their ambition prods occasionally, after a while the time-dissipating habit becomes fixed, and all desire for self-improvement vanishes.

If parents would only try to realize what it would mean to their children in the future to be encouraged in youth to improve themselves, to form in their growing years habits

of study, concentration, and observation, there would be far less ignorance, crime, and unhappiness in the world. In every child a longing for self-culture and a desire to make the most of himself should be patiently fostered. This will be worth infinitely more to him in after life than a fortune, however great.

If possible each child should have some quiet nook in which to be alone to study and think and improve himself. No matter how small the room, or corner, or den, it should have a good light, a little desk or table, a shelf for books, and an easy, comfortable chair. It may be as simple as possible, but let it be so cozy and inviting that it will tempt to study or reading. If each child cannot have a separate place like this, conditions can be so arranged that it will be possible for all to study in the same room. No matter how humble it may be, a home can be made a real self-culture university.

The poorest parents can bestow wealth on their children by encouraging them to make something worth while of themselves, by teaching them to look up, to aspire to do something and to be somebodies in the world. They can



create in them an appetite for high and noble things.

Young people should be made familiar with the life stories of men who lifted themselves to greatness—Lincoln, Garfield, Henry Clay, and other poor boys who overcame all sorts of obstacles to get an education, and who raised themselves to eminence simply by improving their spare time. Stimulus of this sort will work miracles.

Unfortunately, most people think that an education without schools, academies, or colleges, is impracticable or impossible. But there is an opportunity for a college education or a good substitute for it for the poorest boy or girl in the humblest home in America. If a Lincoln could so educate himself that foreigners who met him were impressed with his wide knowledge and comprehensive grasp of subjects; if this boy, who never saw more than a dozen books before he was nearly grown to manhood, could wring the equivalent of a university education out of an inhospitable environment in the wilderness, what cannot the poorest boy, with the manifold advantages of to-day, accomplish! If a deaf, dumb, and

blind Helen Keller could get a college education, what is not possible for boys and girls with unimpaired faculties, and with health and strength and unnumbered opportunities?

Are your disadvantages any greater than Helen Keller's, your environment more discouraging than Abraham Lincoln's?

The distance between ignorance and a liberal education seems so enormous to many backward people that they are discouraged from making an attempt to obtain any education at all. They do not realize how much would come from studying or reading a little each day.

In acquiring an education it is as in laying up money. We know that saving the pennies makes the dollars, saving the dollars makes the thousands, and so on. In exactly the same way every minute we concentrate our mind on a good course of reading, or on any self-discipline or self-improvement, we are helping to amass that which is worth infinitely more to us than a money fortune, for there is no investment like self-investment. This is beyond the reach of fire or flood or tempest—beyond the reach of failure. No matter what happens to

you—if everything is swept from under your feet—if you have a good education and are a good worker, you can start again, for you have your most precious, most valuable capital still intact.

He makes the most of life who makes the most of the passing instant. Nothing is more painful than to hear people, especially young people, talk about ways and means of killing time. Do you realize that when you kill time you are killing your chance in life, killing your opportunity to make good, killing your manhood or womanhood? Waste of time is waste of character, is waste of life.

Killing time is killing that which is infinitely more precious than rubies, for time—the days, hours, minutes, seconds—is the currency with which we purchase the good of life.

At a recent convention of the National Association of Waste Material Dealers some interesting facts in regard to the value of odds and ends of “waste” material were revealed. Delegates to the convention came from every part of the United States and represented an investment in this business of annihilating waste of more than seven hundred million dollars.



One of the reports read stated that more than two million dollars' worth of woolen rags had been exported from the United States the previous year to be manufactured by foreign mills into the cloth known as "shoddy."

Old tin cans, worn-out cooking utensils, discarded hardware of all kinds, furnished one hundred and fourteen million dollars' worth of tin iron, immediately used again in manufacture.

Of course before it reached such a stage of development this business had been going on for years, in a small, disconnected way, in all the larger cities throughout the country. Now that it is organized and made a national factor, as it were, it holds an economic—one might even say, a moral meaning—and carries a valuable social lesson.

This enormously profitable business has been built up on the fragments of material thrown away by housekeepers as practically valueless.

How many millions of dollars' worth of energy and time do most of us throw away daily, wantonly waste in purposeless action or unthinking idleness?

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On the floor of the gold working room in the United States mint at Philadelphia, there is a wooden lattice-work which is taken up when the floor is swept and the fine particles of gold dust—valued at thousands of dollars yearly—are thus saved. Every one who hopes to make the most of himself or herself must have a similar network to catch “the raspings and parings of existence, those leavings of days and bits of hours” which most people sweep into the waste of life.

One man becomes rich by means of trifles which others throw away,—scraps of leather, cotton waste, slag, iron filings, hoofs and horns of cattle, abandoned mines, abandoned farms. One man rises to fame by means of the “odd moments” that another regards as useless. Each has the same number of hours in his day; the difference lies in the use to which the hours are put.

From the same material one man builds a palace, another a hovel; one surrounds himself with comforts and luxuries and another lives in poverty and obscurity, but there is no favoritism with Fate in her distribution of time.

To give examples of what may be achieved by the determination to improve one's self and the habit of utilizing to this end every spare moment, we need not go back to the time of Franklin, Clay, Webster, Lincoln and other giants of past generations. There are instances in plenty in the lives around us—Edwin Markham, Senator Beveridge, President Schurman, of Cornell University, Andrew Carnegie, and hosts of others prominently before the public, have risen to their present positions chiefly because of their assiduity in utilizing every spare moment for self-improvement.

I could quote hundreds of instances that have come under my personal notice, or of which I have read, to show how young men and women, every day, by persistent self-education, are rising to eminent positions.

Miss Marie Nielsen, once a servant, studied during all of her evenings, and at length succeeded in fitting herself for college. She now occupies the chair of art in the Danish College of Des Moines, Iowa.

Alfred Trombetti, one of the greatest living philologists, laid the foundation of his great-



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ness when, as a barber's boy, working at a wage of one franc a week, in Bologna, Italy, he mastered English, French, German, Latin, Greek, Arabic and Hebrew during the evening hours when others rested or amused themselves.

A young woman in Waterloo, Iowa, whom poverty had compelled to be a "field hand" from the age of seven to fourteen, and who, from the age of fourteen to twenty-four, carried the household burdens of a family of twelve, devoted her scant spare hours to preparing herself for college. She is now a practicing physician of such ability that her income amounts to twenty thousand dollars a year.

The story of the late Governor John A. Johnson of Wisconsin, who, by his own unaided efforts, though burdened from childhood with the care of younger brothers and sisters, rose from the direst poverty to the highest office in his State, may be paralleled in many fields. There are railroad, bank, and college presidents, senators, representatives, merchants, manufacturers, scientists, inventors, men at the top in all lines of endeavor all over this country, who have risen in a similar way.

As a matter of fact, is there any finer aim in this world than to make oneself a larger man or woman, a nobler citizen? Is there anything more inspiring than the ceaseless endeavor to be somebody worth while in the world, to stand for a little higher ideals in your community, to leave the world at least a little better for having been in it?

This is called the age of woman. Women have more opportunity, more scope, more power than in any previous generation. Yet how many of them fail to make the most of their golden age; how many fritter away their numerous opportunities for self-improvement, and then wonder why they are not accorded greater power! Because they have neglected their chances for self-culture many wives cease to be attractive to their husbands, whose lives are in constant touch with other lives, and who are constantly growing. These women have no plan for their lives. They are at the beck and call of every chance acquaintance, at the mercy of every trivial interruption.

Now, it is impossible for any life to be a real success unless it is built upon a plan. There must be rigid rules for the use of the spare time

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of one who is ambitious to make the most of oneself. The most successful people have a daily program which is invariably enforced. They do not allow interruptions to mar their opportunity and ruin the possibility of attaining their aim. Having a life plan and adhering to it greatly strengthens moral fiber.

All the great souls who have worked up from obscurity have held their spare moments sacred to culture, to mental expansion.

I was recently talking with a man who has had a most remarkable career. In his youth his acquaintances could not understand why he was not always at leisure to make social calls and visits, to go out evenings to all sorts of entertainments, as they did. But he had determined to make the most of himself, and he made it a cast-iron rule to shut himself up a certain part of every day and every evening in order to get time to carry out his self-improvement plan.

What a loss it would be to the world if it were possible to take out of Lincoln's biography all that he gained in self-improvement by reading, studying, and thinking during his evenings and spare hours! What became of



all the boys and girls of Lincoln's acquaintance? They doubtless lamented the fact that such a splendid story-teller and entertainer had to devote himself to books when he could have added so much to their good time; but Abe Lincoln was in earnest. He had gotten a glimpse of his possibilities through the "Life of Washington." He became conscious that he, too, had capabilities awaiting development. He resolved that nothing should rob him of a chance to gain inspiration and helpfulness from every book he could borrow. It was this dead-in-earnest habit of boyhood which, in maturity, made him one of the grandest figures in American history.

Why not decide to-day, this moment, on the particular course you want to pursue and begin at once to lay aside daily a certain portion of time to this end?

Consider what could be accomplished, even in one year, if every member of every family would concentrate his mind for a single hour, when the house was quiet, on the acquisition of some branch of knowledge,—history, geography, literature, mathematics, a foreign language, or whatever else to which his taste in-

clined! If each one would hold in mind persistently his special subjects and devote his thoughts to these whenever his attention was not absolutely required elsewhere, he would be amazed at his progress. He would rapidly become more efficient in every direction. Every evening's study would make him better fitted for the next day's work, and the increased power and intelligence gained in concentrated effort would lead toward a richer, fuller life in every respect. The consciousness, too, that he had done his best to make his life larger would give him satisfaction and genuine happiness.

One of the greatest regrets of many people as they near the end of their life journey, is that they did not make better use of their time. Thousands of people go through life constantly regretting their lack of early advantages of education, yet they have wasted time enough to have given themselves the equivalent of a college education many times over by wise improvement of their spare moments.

Tell me how a young man uses his little ragged edges of time after his day's work is done, during the long winter evenings, what

he is revolving in his mind at every opportunity, and I will tell you what that young man's future will be.

It is the constant absorption of knowledge from every possible source that makes a man well-informed, and it is a great variety of knowledge that makes him broad and sympathetic where he would otherwise be narrow, hard.

Happy is the youth who has formed the fixed habit of self-improvement, who is always trying to make himself a little larger and a little better informed, a little better prepared for his opportunity when it comes. The habitual absorber of knowledge has the advantage of touching life at many points. His interests are wide, and, as a rule, he is an interesting man.

If you are ambitious to make the most of yourself, and especially if you are trying to make up for the loss of an early education, remember every person you meet can add something to your stock of information. If you meet a printer, he can post you in the printer's art; a bricklayer can tell you many things you did not know before; you will find the



average farmer wonderfully wise on points upon which you are ignorant. The follower of any vocation, even your own, often one who works beside you, can give you bits of valuable knowledge.

Many a man goes through life touching it at only a few points. He is indifferent to everything except his own little specialty—and for this reason he is not exceptionally good even at that.

The man who holds an open mind toward all truth, who believes that every one and everything holds something of value for him, who, like the bee, goes through life extracting honey from all sources, is the man that really and truly lives.

There are multitudes of people to-day plodding along in mediocrity, handicapped by the lack of early education and sufficient training, who waste precious time in frivolous amusements, in idleness, in loitering, in dawdling, in foolish, useless chatter. They could give themselves a superb fitting for life if they would only utilize these wasted hours in self-improvement, with a purpose, but they are not willing to pay the price. They are not willing

to sacrifice the lower for the higher, not willing to forfeit the theater, the dance, even idle gossip, for that pearl of great price—self-improvement, which would completely alter their standing in life.

It takes a great deal of grit and determination to use the hours and half hours, otherwise devoted to pleasure, for rigorous self-improvement, but it pays in the end.

Competition has become so terrific, and life so strenuous that we need to be armed with every weapon of mental growth and culture possible. The most profitable work we can do is to raise our personal value, for the requirements in every field are constantly growing broader and higher. And, as usual, with the demand has come the supply—means for self-improvement are daily multiplying.

There is no excuse for ignorance to-day. Any one who has ambition and health can educate himself in his leisure moments and increase his value to the world tenfold. I know a number of young men who were obliged to go to work at from twelve to fourteen years of age, who had almost no schooling at all, but who have so improved their spare time that no

one could ever dream they were not college-educated.

I have in mind one man who was never even graduated from a high school—and yet he has been principal of two. He has been offered chairs in some of our universities. Long winter evenings and half holidays meant something to this man. He squeezed from them all their possibilities.

Wisdom will not open her doors to those who are not willing to pay the price of admission. She will not sell her jewels for money, but will give them to every poor boy or girl who yearns and works for her.

The moment a young man ceases to think of lack of opportunities, either for an education or a career, but resolutely looks conditions in the face and resolves to change them, he scores a victory and lays the cornerstone of a solid career. Even if he must go slow, he will go far.

Young man or woman whose education has been neglected, what will you do during the long winter evenings? Will you drift with the current, taking no stand concerning your future? That way lies the danger that you will



remain among the eclipsed, the unnoticed, the unprovided for. The future never takes care of itself; it is taken care of, shaped, molded, colored by the present. Our to-days are what our yesterdays made them; our to-morrows must be the product of our to-days. What we get out of life depends very largely on our determination to get the most out of each moment as it passes.

We hear a great deal about the rich getting all the good things in the world and the poor getting little or nothing, but the Creator has made it impossible to monopolize the things which are of the greatest value to human beings. There is no monopoly of time. The poorest slave has just as long a day, just as long a year as the most powerful monarch. The richest men in the world, the greatest and the most powerful kings of industry could not purchase a single second of time from the most miserable wretch that crawls in rags.

Did it ever occur to you that many people have given themselves the equivalent of a college education in just these spare moments that you so thoughtlessly throw away evenings? Do you realize that there never was a time in

the history of the world when it was so easy to acquire an education, when it was worth so much as to-day, when added knowledge gives so much power?

A person might as well say that there is no use trying to save anything from his small salary or income, as to say there is no use in saving his spare moments, because he thinks he never can get a liberal education by studying at home.

It is perfectly possible to "pick up" a splendid education in one's spare time by taking a course in a good correspondence school. Thousands of men have been saved from the mortifications and embarrassments to which they would have been subject because of their ignorance by courses in these schools. Many owe practically all their business and social success to the knowledge thus obtained.

I know a young man who is always doing something to improve himself. He travels a great deal and always carries with him wherever he goes something worth reading, miniature classics, or the lesson papers of a correspondence school. The result is, he is well informed on a great variety of subjects. He

is very widely read in English literature, in the sciences, and in other important branches of knowledge.

What this man has accomplished in the odds and ends of time is a constant rebuke to those who waste their leisure. He has no more "spare time" than the average employee, yet because of this habit of self-improvement, he is classed far above the average.

Such eagerness to improve oneself is an indication of innate superiority, the genius that wins.

Vice-President Wilson when a boy, carried a book with him when working on the farm, and before he was twenty-two he had managed to read a thousand volumes. Lincoln kept a book always near him, so he could utilize the precious moments which otherwise would be lost. Thurlow Weed used to take his books with him when he went into the sugar orchard at night to tend the sap kettles. Stretched out before the campfire he read as the sap boiled. When the Rev. Dr. Collyer worked at the forge, he always kept some precious bits of literature near his anvil so that he could feed his mind during the intervals of his work.



Men and women who have utilized only a small percentage of their ability, who have not made it fully available by discipline and education, always work at a great disadvantage. A man capable, by nature, of being an employer, is often compelled to be a very ordinary employee, because his mind is untrained. We all know this side of the picture. But all too few of us remember the other side, or realize that now, to-day, we may begin to work on it, and, stroke by stroke, minute by minute, make ourselves fit for the larger position of responsibility and power.

“It is because we don’t improve ourselves when we have an opportunity,” says a helpful writer, “but, instead, let the shining hours pass over us unheeded, that Dame Opportunity so often knocks at our door at a time when we are unfitted to make her welcome, or the rainy days come and find us unprepared for the downpour.”

Education is power. Every bit of valuable information you pick up, every bit of good reading or thinking you do, in fact anything you do to make yourself a larger, completer man or woman, will also help you to advance in

your career. I have known youths who were working very hard for very little money to do more for their advancement in their spare time, their evenings and half-holidays, by improving their minds, than by the actual work for which they were paid. Their salaries were insignificant in comparison with their growth of mind, and their employers were quick to realize their value and to promote them.

What one gets out of life depends very largely on the preparation made for it. Accomplishment cannot exceed one's inherent efficiency. No matter what investment you may make in life, there is none so satisfactory as self-investment in growth coining bits of leisure into knowledge and power.

## CHAPTER XV

### FINDING YOUR PLACE

ONE of the most beautiful scenes in Maeterlinck's exquisite play, "The Blue Bird," is that which pictures the unborn babes of the future waiting to be brought to earth. They are crowding toward the ship of old Father Time, clamoring to be taken aboard. Each holds in a tiny hand the commission it has been given to execute in the world. One is commissioned to be an artist, another an engineer, another a poet, another an architect, and so on, from the highest to the humblest.

This poetic scene is a vivid illustration of the great truth that the Creator has hidden within every normal person at least one talent which he or she is bound to develop to its utmost.

What your friends or relatives or the people at large think you ought to do has nothing whatever to do with the call which the Creator has indicated in your blood and brain. You



alone can read that sealed message which you brought with you into the world. It is a secret to all but you and your God. Your dearest friend cannot share it. It is nearer to you than your breath, and your help to civilization depends on your faithfulness in executing its command.

The difference between success and failure turns on reading one's commission aright, finding one's true place in life.

A wealthy young American, eager to make a successful career, was induced by friends who admired his amateur drawings to go to Paris to study art. After three years' painstaking study he concluded that he would never make a great artist. His nature rebelled against continuous work with the brush. It was a bore to him to copy pictures; but his whole mind seemed set toward farming. Deciding that it would be better to be a successful farmer than an indifferent painter he returned to America to pursue the humbler calling.

This man now has an ideal farm of thousands of acres in Illinois. He has built a beautiful house, which is furnished with superior taste. He goes abroad every winter to study

scientific methods of farming and cattle-raising in other countries. He gives employment to a large number of men, and assists the smaller farmers in his community. In short, he has become a happy, useful member of society because he has found his work, the thing he is fitted by nature to do.

Had this man not had the opportunity as well as the sense to correct the mistake of his first choice, what a miserable unhappy failure he would have been!

One of the most pathetic pictures in a great city is the vast number of people who are striving and struggling to succeed in a mistaken calling, depriving themselves of comforts, and even necessities, in the vain effort to do that for which they are not at all suited, when the same expenditure of energy along the line of their talent—the line of least resistance—would yield them infinitely greater success and happiness.

There are thousands of art students, elocution students, students of dramatic art, men and women in every vocation, trying in vain to be masters in their line, and perpetually smarting under the pain of disappointment, always unhappy, because they cannot do the big

things that others in the same field are doing.

It is impossible to estimate the tremendous injury to the individual and the loss to society resulting from misplaced men and women, the round pegs in square holes, the millions of people who are unhappy and unproductive because they are doing work which they dislike, or for which they are not adapted.

I always feel sorry for the man who has missed his calling, who is conscious that he is a misfit, a round peg in a square hole, and who never can measure up to his highest possibilities because he has postponed making a change until too late.

In some cases a mistake at the start proves fatal, and in most instances it is far easier to choose a career than it is to change it. It often happens that after we have gone along a certain distance on our chosen path we feel irresistibly called to another vocation, but do not find the way open to follow it, even though we seek it diligently and with tears, as Esau sought to regain his bartered birthright.

This is one reason why we should try, as far as possible, to be absolutely certain that we have made the right choice before committing ourselves to any particular vocation.



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If you choose one that does not fit, you will feel as awkward as you would in a suit of clothes made for a man much larger or much smaller than yourself. Your choice will not only make you look ridiculous but it will rob you of power. Neither will your heart be in your work, and love for one's work is what takes the drudgery out of it and gives satisfaction.

If your position chafes you, if the hours drag heavily, if you do not feel a pride in your work, if there is not something in you which says "Amen" to what you do, you are out of place. But if your work gives you joy, if you go to it in the morning with greater pleasure than you leave it at night, if you feel yourself growing, your life expanding, you may know you have found your place.

A person will never succeed to any great degree in a calling that is constantly offending his taste. One with an artistic temperament, for example, will rebel against doing mere mechanical work. A natural brain worker will be unhappy so long as his muscles only are exercised in his daily tasks. The life work that develops must be congenial. That which

grates upon the sensibilities, rasps the taste, is dwarfing, demoralizing. It is not one's appointed work.

Although every one has a particular niche appointed to him in life's gallery, it is not always easy to find it. Many young people think their real bent should be so pronounced that there could be no possible mistaking it, but this is not always the case. It has not been so in a multitude of instances, even of those who have left a distinct mark on the world. Sometimes the discovery of one's leading talent seems almost purely accidental.

Professor Bell's discovery of the telephone was something of an accident. He was an ordinary teacher of the phonetic method of speech when he found the first clue to his life work. He and his father had already devised an alphabet for the deaf and dumb. But one day it occurred to him that if sound could be communicated through a string, stretched a hundred feet or more between the bottoms of two tomato cans, so that a conversation could be carried on from opposite ends of the string, that the same principle might be worked over a wire. There was nothing very remarkable

about this. Any boy of ordinary intelligence might have drawn the same conclusion from the string experiment.

But Professor Bell, who was then a poor man, did not stop here. He had found the work he was sent into the world to do, and he toiled on until he gave mankind one of the greatest inventions of the nineteenth century. The simple suggestion from the experiment with two tomato cans and a piece of string led him into a scientific career of which he had never before dreamed.

Neither did Thomas A. Edison start out with the idea of being an inventor or a discoverer. The secret of his big prenatal commission came to him gradually. One little suggestion led to another. His first experiments were of the simplest kind, made on the baggage car of the train on which he was plying his occupation as newsboy.

Many men and women who have accomplished splendid tasks in life did not discover their vocation until they were well on in years.

Your real bent may not be so very pronounced that you cannot help knowing it. But though there may be a number of things



you can do equally well, it is possible by examining yourself closely to find some indication of your strongest talent. If you find, no matter what line of work you take up, that your mind keeps going back to some one particular thing, this is a pretty strong suggestion that your special talent lies in that direction. If you are floundering around uncertain about your choice of a career, thinking first of this occupation or profession, and then of that, trying one experiment after another, but always coming back to some one which seems to have a greater grip upon you than anything else, you may be very sure that there lies your future.

One of the great dangers to be avoided in choosing a career in this land where the dollar is worshiped as nowhere else on the globe, is that of putting the emphasis on the wrong thing, of making the material returns from our vocation the deciding factor in one's choice. When a youth sees his father, and perhaps most of the older people he knows, in breathless pursuit of material gain, as though wealth were the real measure of success and there were nothing else worth while, he is apt to be influenced very injuriously in his choice.

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To choose a career just because we think we can make money in it, without regard to the influence it will have on our personality or our character, is demoralizing. Our work should be our great character builder, should be a perpetual unfoldment, a constant broadener of our nature, of our ideals and our life.

One who chooses a calling which will make one less a man, less a woman, which will tend to call out his lower instead of his higher qualities, which will stimulate greed, a selfish ambition, a passion for self-aggrandizement, is a traitor to the great cause of humanity, which is to elevate mankind. He is a traitor to himself, to the trust reposed in him by the Creator at his birth.

The making of a true man, as of a true woman, should be the first object of a vocation. Our youth should be taught that life is God's great school for mankind, a kindergarten for the development, the unfoldment of men and women, for the calling out of their resources, of every bit of personal power He has implanted in them.

The highest success of the acorn is the splendid oak, in which all of the possibilities

wrapped in the acorn are unfolded. That is the success of the acorn. The success of a superb, manly man is the unfolding of the highest possibilities that are wrapped up in the acorn youth. In other words, the highest success of the youth is the highest possible self-expression.

A father can greatly help his son who is seeking a light on his future by showing what an effect his choice of a career may have not only on himself but on others. He might say to him something like this, "My boy, think what an irreparable loss of one of the superbest examples in all history would have been ours had Abraham Lincoln chosen a mere money-making career along the lines of those about him who were struggling and striving for wealth! Every American institution is larger and grander to-day, every lawyer is a little better lawyer, every physician a little better physician, every school, every college, in fact every American institution to-day is a little better because of Abraham Lincoln's choice. Hundreds of thousands of youths have been inspired by his marvelous example. Lincoln's life has been an inspiration to more American



youths than any other man born on the American continent."

In pointing out to your boy what a difference it would have made to every boy who came after him if Lincoln had chosen the lower instead of the higher; in showing him the irretrievable loss this country would have suffered if all of the uplift, all of the improvements in our national life resulting from the contagion of his example could be wiped out of American history to-day, you will, perhaps, save him from making a sordid choice, from a career which would develop only his greed, his grasping, selfish qualities instead of bringing out the God-like side of him.

Wendell Phillips, Charles Sumner, Phillips Brooks—hundreds of men in our history might be cited as illustrations of the result of an upward choice.

"I would rather be right than be President," said Henry Clay. Better be a day laborer and retain your dignity as a man than barter all that is best in you for money, place or power. But it is well, also, to choose an upward career. Don't be content to remain a clerk or a day laborer if you can become an honest merchant,

or a statesman that cannot be bribed. We need both.

Though Henry Clay always clung to the right as he saw it, he was nobly ambitious, and from the little "mill boy of the slashes" evolved the famous orator and statesman.

If the higher job, the better position is possible for you, don't be satisfied with anything less. You are here to make the most of yourself. Don't quibble or shirk about it. Go ahead and be what God meant you to be. That is the whole duty of mankind.

The lack of proper ambition, satisfaction with a low aim is one of the great curses of mankind. Everywhere we find young people with splendid brains and of good education, filling very ordinary positions, doing work that could be done by those with half their ability. They often plod along for years, weakly intending or hoping to get up higher, but not realizing the tremendous clutch which habit is getting on them. Each day they find themselves growing more accustomed to the lower place until finally, they become buried in the rut of routine and cease to look, let alone strive, upward.

A noble ambition, the habit of choosing the higher is of untold value, for it keeps us always reaching up, trying to measure up to our highest possibilities.

No one should choose a vocation which will not, because of its cleanness, its dignity and its fitness to his special ability, be a perpetual stimulus to the best in him, a constant spur to his highest, noblest ambition. The mere consciousness of doing that which gives a sense of demoralization, which does not get the consent of our higher self, is deadening, discouraging, deteriorating.

Any vocation which would have a tendency to make a human scrub oak of you, a dwarfed man instead of a splendid specimen of manhood should be avoided. There are many kinds of work, not harmful in themselves, but which do not make a call upon the best that is in one; they do not exercise those qualities which develop the strongest men and women. There are some occupations, the very tendency of which is to encourage inaction, sluggishness; they have no upward pull; they do not make any special call upon the highest and best human qualities.



In other words, there are multitudes of occupations which are not actually demoralizing or character deteriorating in their influence, but which do not make a great call upon the highest human attributes. They do not tend to encourage those which dominate in our ideal men and women.

Some vocations, such as bartending for instance, have a distinctly downward pull, a demoralizing tendency. Others have an encoarsening effect on those who follow them. Take horse dealing. While the horse is one of the noblest of animals, yet horse dealers and traders, to say the least, are not, as a rule, ideal specimens of citizens. The temptation in their business to deceive is so great that the average horse dealer cannot resist the course which tends to demoralize him. Gambling and betting on horses, practicing the tricks of the race tracks, are likely to follow dealing or trafficking in horses. Of course there are many who resist this demoralizing tendency, but it is not easy to escape the influence of our associations.

Some vocations tend to kill the sympathies, to harden the whole nature. It is said that the men in our great stockyards whose busi-

ness it is to slaughter animals, who put thousands of them to death in a day, become abnormally hardened to suffering. In many places butchers are not allowed to serve as jurymen, especially in criminal cases, on account of the influence of their occupation on their mind.

We tend to become like the influences about us. They shape us, mold our character. Your vocation will leave its indelible mark upon you for good or ill. It will have a refining or a coarsening effect according to its nature.

There are many occupations in which you may get a good living, but in which there is no growth. They will not push you out, force you to enlarge your mentality and make you a broader and a bigger man in every respect.

Whatever you do for a living avoid occupations which do not force you to grow; which will not make any special call upon your originality, your ingenuity, your resourcefulness; which will not bring your initiative or your qualities of leadership into play.

You should avoid all occupations which are not helpful to humanity, or which tend to in-

jure the health, to devitalize the body. Do not choose one which must be carried on in the dark, in damp, sunless, or otherwise unhealthy locations. Plants would not thrive under such conditions, and certainly human plants should have as fair a chance for growth as vegetable plants.

Choose if possible a vocation which has a splendid motive, a fine purpose back of it. Study men in the vocation you think of entering, and note its influence on their lives. Are they broad, liberal, intelligent, helpful men? Are they looked up to in your community? Do they stand well among their fellowmen? Are they respected? You cannot judge by an isolated case. You must consider the general tendencies of the influence of the vocation upon those who follow it.

It is one of the tragedies of life to be in a position which is demoralizing instead of ennobling, enlarging; to be engaged in an occupation against which one's better nature is in a constant state of protest. Half the battle of life, more than half the secret of happiness, is in getting in the right place, so that one can feel all of his faculties tugging away at his pur-



pose. No one is doing the best of which he is capable until his work arouses all of the enthusiasm and zest of his being.

No one is strong enough to make a success of a career against which his whole nature protests. It is true that a strong character, with great determination and a high sense of duty may wring out of a position to which he is ill-adapted that which will pass for success, but there will be no immortality in it, and no satisfaction for him. There will be something wanting. It will lack heart, enthusiasm, buoyancy, spontaneity, every essential element of true success and happiness.

There should be self-discovery schools in every city and hamlet in the country for the purpose of helping boys and girls to discover what Nature intended them for, what trade, occupation or profession they should fit themselves for. The Gary school system is giving attention to the problem, and the time will come, it may be within a very few years, when every boy and girl will have the assistance of vocation experts in helping them to choose a career. They will also be given a thorough training for their specialty and will be started

in their work by scientific specialists. Their health, their ideals, their temperament, their inherited tendencies, will be carefully observed and scientifically treated. Each will be studied individually, and advised where and how to place himself, that is, where he would be likely to make the greatest success, to make the most possible out of his material,—his natural aptitude, tastes, inclinations, strength and ability.

With the right sort of education and training there should not, and would not, be such a sharp line of demarcation between the child's play years and his work years. His favorite games often discover his native tendencies, and his play years should run so gradually and so imperceptibly into his work years that the life would be one continuous whole.

There is no reason why an adult's work should not give him as much satisfaction and pleasure as the child's play work, which is often very strenuous, gives him. The play life should merge into the work life as naturally as childhood merges into youth, youth into middle life, and middle life into old age. Work was really intended by the Creator to be as enjoyable for adults as play is for children.

There is certainly something wrong in man's ordering of things when we see men and women everywhere wearing such sad, disappointed faces, faces which reflect hatred of their work, bearing an expression which indicates that they are getting their living by drudgery instead of by delightful activity. When every one is in his right place, the world will be happier, more productive, more progressive. The great mass of human beings are ineffective, inefficient, unhappy because they are out of place, their strongest powers do not find play in their work.

Among the very ordinary class of employees, the perpetual clerks, those in subordinate positions, who are never advanced, and who plod along to old age in mediocrity, in discouragement, under the lash of duty, without enthusiasm or zest, there may be covered up superb farmers, physicians, engineers, people fitted for other departments of life than those into which they happened to drift.

Multitudes of such employees are afraid to drop a half loaf for the possible whole one of their dreams lest they lose even the half on which they are wholly dependent. These peo-



ple feel that there is something better in them than they have ever used in their work, but they are in such a position, with others depending on them, that they do not dare to take chances, and so they plod along with the half loaf and with half growth, with no possibility of enlargement of life, of ever attaining fullness, completeness, their possible stature.

One of the saddest sights in the world is that of a young man of fine promise, with a superb head, ambitious to make the most of himself, but sacrificing his possibilities in an occupation unworthy of him, or one which brings into play only a very small part of his ability, and perhaps the least important part.

Sometimes this happens through accident, but more often it is owing to the ignorance of youth. A boy just out of school, ignorant of what is in him, but eager to get a job, takes the first thing that comes to him, regardless of whether he is fitted for it or not. Then, perhaps not knowing just what he wants to do, he continues in it simply because nothing better offers. He gets enough increase of salary from time to time to feed his hope, and this keeps him doing the little thing when he could

do a much better thing if he were in the right place or under the right conditions.

In this way young men of superb possibilities often become round pegs in square holes. They have so much native ability that their employers encourage them to remain, feeding them with hope, and perhaps at the end of several years they awaken to the fact that they have really mistaken their calling. Then they feel that it is too late to make a change, or that perhaps something will happen to alter conditions.

This is just where the great danger of a first mistake lies. A conscientious youth who works hard, even if he is not where all of his powers and talents pull to the greatest advantage, although he only limps when he might run, will naturally get ahead somewhat. A lame man who keeps on walking can make considerable progress.

There is a tendency in such a position to deceive oneself, to try to make oneself believe that after all one may be doing as well as could reasonably be expected. Progressing a little and getting a little more salary from year to year has been the means of keeping multitudes of round pegs in square holes.

Parents are often to blame for selfish reasons in encouraging a youth to remain in a position to which he is not naturally fitted. By hard work he has managed to get ahead a little, to make a little more salary, and the parents do not want him to take chances in changing. Or they may dissuade a boy from trying to be what he is fitted for because of difficulties in the way of his ambition.

For example, a boy may have in him the making of a splendid engineer, and yet may be discouraged at the prospect of long weary years of preparation with little or no remuneration; and his parents may induce him to give up the idea because of the cost and time involved. They may advise him to take some job which will yield more immediate returns.

The temptation to get into some position where they will begin to earn at once is one of the rocks on which many young people founder. They want to earn as much as possible, as soon as possible, and so, at the start, they sacrifice the larger possibility for the little immediate salary, which is so pitifully small in comparison with what they give up.



Whatever you do, don't yield to temptation of this sort. Don't cripple your whole future for a little temporary gain. Resolve to do the best thing possible to you, the thing that best fits your ability. No matter if it takes longer to prepare for it, longer to get where it will be remunerative, always consider the thing that will be best for you in the end. No matter if you have to change from one thing to another before you find your true vocation, don't be afraid to do it.

At college the rowing coach shifts the oarsmen to different positions to find out where each can do his best. Some men row strong near the bow of the boat, others in the center, others near the stern. Some must man a sweep out on the starboard side, others on the port side. We must do the same in life. Always we must seek the position where we can bring all of our strength to bear.

I heard of a girl who had come so near failure as a saleswoman in the black goods department of a big department store that the manager had made up his mind to discharge her. But being a conscientious, kind-hearted man, he decided to have a talk with her first, and try

to find out why she had not been a success. The girl confessed that the work so completely discouraged her that she could not put her heart in it. Further questioning brought out the fact that she had fine perceptive powers regarding colors and that she greatly enjoyed harmonizing and matching tints. Instead of discharging her, the manager shifted the girl to a department where her ability would have more play. As a matter of course she made a remarkable success in the new place without even as much effort as she had put into the work of selling black goods.

The great thing in life is to get the right oar, to find the place where our strongest faculties will pull their maximum. And what a difference there is between working with joy and constant encouragement, and laboriously drudging, forcing work out of oneself instead of springing to it spontaneously, with buoyancy, enthusiasm!

Many persons enter a vocation with little knowledge of what it really means; and, after the glamour, the newness, the novelty of their choice has worn off, perhaps they find themselves tied for life to an occupation for

which they are not fitted at all, and which does not harmonize with their ideals.

Others become discouraged with the drudgery of preparation for a life work, and are tempted to turn aside to something which seems easier and pleasanter.

This is one of the things which makes it hard for many young people who are learning a trade or a profession to commit themselves fully to it. The young medical student, becoming discouraged by the seemingly endless detail and monotony of anatomy, chemistry, physiology, etc., not sufficiently advanced to appreciate the pleasanter side of his vocation, sees the young lawyer going along the street with the mysterious green bag under his arm, hears him pleading a case in court, and imagines he has made a great mistake in entering a profession so full of details, one which has so many unpleasant phases as that of medicine; and the law student, who has had many a headache and a heartache over his Blackstone Commentaries, imagines he has made even a greater mistake. Law is not what he thought it would be, the physician's life seems more attractive.



I heard of a youth who, smitten with an ambition to be a brilliant lawyer, won his father's permission to study in a law office. After a week's work he got tired and went home. His father, surprised, asked him if he did not like the law. "No," was the son's reply, "and I am sorry I ever took the trouble to learn it!"

There is necessarily a great deal of detail and a lot of drudgery and monotony in learning a trade or acquiring a profession, and it is perfectly natural for young people to get more or less discouraged during the early part of their apprenticeship. But if they are fitted for their work, after they have grasped its elementary principles, and have gotten sufficiently far along to acquire a degree of facility in it, they become more and more satisfied, more and more encouraged and enthusiastic. Unfortunately, there are many who never reach this point; their vocation never becomes a part of them. They are so loosely attached to it that they are easily separated from it. They have not enough of the grit and persistence necessary to make a success in any calling.

Whatever your qualities, or ambitions, study

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yourself carefully before committing yourself to a choice. And when you choose a vocation let it be one which will call out the largest man or woman in you, that will give play to your individuality, to complete self-expression. Do not be satisfied to be an automaton. Determine that whatever you do in life shall be a part of yourself, and that the manner of your doing it shall express your ideals.

Do not choose a profession or occupation because your father, or uncle, or brother is in it. Do not choose a business because you inherit it, or because parents or friends want you to follow it. Do not choose it because others have made fortunes in it. Do not choose it because it is considered the "proper thing" and a "genteel" business. The mania for a "genteel" occupation, for a "soft job" which eliminates drudgery, thorns, hardships, and all disagreeable things, and one which can be learned with very little effort, ruins many a youth.

How many men have been made ridiculous for life by choosing law or medicine or theology, simply because they are "honorable professions"! These men might have been successful farmers or merchants. The very glory

of the profession which they thought would make them shining lights simply renders more conspicuous their incapacity and unfitness.

When you feel that you have found your right place never look backward; stick to it with all the tenacity you can muster. Let nothing tempt you to swerve a hair's breadth from your aim. Do not let the thorns which appear in every vocation, or temporary despondency or disappointments shake your purpose.

Firm determination, fixity of purpose, has a great moral bearing on our success, for it leads others to feel confidence in us, and this counts for much. It gives credit and moral support in a thousand ways. People always believe in a man with a fixed purpose, and will be far more willing to help him than they would if he were indifferently attached to his vocation, and likely at any time to make a change, or to fail. Everybody knows that determined men are not likely to fail. They carry conviction and assurance in their very pluck, grit, and determination.

When choosing your career, be quiet enough in your inner consciousness to hear the still small voice which is often smothered by low



desires and unworthy ambitions. Remember that this choice of a career is "for better or for worse." The career you choose in youth must be largely the vehicle not only of your physical prosperity, but of your growth and happiness, of your service to society, and ultimately of the happiness and welfare of those dependent on you.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE SECRET OF HAPPINESS

IN his lectures on "The Happy Life," ex-President Eliot of Harvard says, "We must be sure to give due weight in our minds to the good side of every event which has two sides. A fierce northeaster drives some vessels out of their course, and others upon the ruthless rocks. Property and life are lost. But that same storm watered the crops upon ten thousand farms, or filled the springs which later will yield to men and animals their necessary drink."

Nothing else will give such a tremendous return in happiness and efficiency as the cultivation of a cheerful, hopeful philosophy, the habituating ourselves to looking on the bright side—for there *are* two sides to everything.

If we were all trained to look persistently on the bright side, to refuse to dwell on the dark side, the millennium would be at hand. Every

one would be happy, and life would be a song instead of a groan, a glory instead of a grind, as it is for so many.

A vast number of people resolutely close the door against happiness and persistently look on the dark side. They seal up all the avenues by which joy and sunshine could enter and illuminate their lives. They cut themselves off from the good things intended for them by their doubts, their fears, their suspicions, their anxieties, their jealousies, their hatreds, their revengeful thoughts, their poverty thoughts. These obscure all the brightness and joy of life. They shut out the sunshine and make it all shadows.

"There is no sunshine for those who persist in keeping their shutters barred," said Theodore Cuyler. "Joy is not gained by asking for it, but only by acting for it." If we want to be happy we must throw down the bars that keep sunshine and cheerfulness out of our lives. We must keep clear our avenues of joy, or joy cannot enter our souls.

There is no other thing in human philosophy which pays so well, from every point of view, as the cultivation of heart sunshine, a



cheerful outlook upon life, a mental attitude that sees the best instead of the worst side of everything. It is the most magical of physicians, for it heals all ills and affords a balm for all the sorrows and misfortunes of life. Even though he may have but very little money, a cheerful soul seems to have about everything that is necessary to make life happy, while a morose, gloomy, sad, melancholy person is miserable, no matter how much money he may have.

I know a rich man with an acid disposition who sours everything he touches, who spreads gloom everywhere he goes. I have never heard him say a cheerful word to anybody. He is morose, hard, exacting, critical, selfish, greedy. No one loves him, not even his own children, and his wife merely endures him because she is dependent upon him. When he leaves this world I doubt if any soul will really regret it. What is there in such a life that is worth the having? I would rather have a sunny disposition and poverty than all this man's wealth. I would infinitely prefer it to a great fortune with a discontented mind, an unhappy disposition, for money cannot buy soul sunshine.

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Sunshine in the inner, as well as in the outer, world is the source of all that is strong, wholesome, and upbuilding. Darkness and gloom in the outer world produce rank, noisome weeds, weak, sickly, unfruitful plants. Darkness and gloom in the inner world weaken the hand of the worker, palsy his efforts, make him puny, unproductive.

The tonic of soul sunshine which makes the eyes sparkle and sends the health bounding through the system, which lights up the face with hope, is one of the most beneficent forces that was ever given to mankind. It is a great producer. It is to the individual what the sun is to the earth. It adds wonderfully to one's active ability, and increases mental and physical power.

We are finding that whatever tends to make one happy, contented, to increase one's peace of mind, happiness and efficiency and well-being generally, tends to produce health and to discourage the development of any disease germ which may be latent in the system, and which would quickly develop under the poisonous conditions caused by an adverse mental attitude,—the result of worry, chronic anxiety or

despondency. It is well known that discouragement is a great encourager of disease and all sorts of physical ills. A discouraged, despondent mind loses its resiliency and its natural disease-resisting power. Collapse often follows ill news, or disappointment, anything of a depressing nature.

There is no doubt that multitudes of people are physically and mentally indisposed because of the fearful depressing influence of discouragement. Our best physicians, realizing this fact, keep all unfavorable knowledge away from their patients and take great pains to cheer them up and to surround them with a bright, joyous, courageous atmosphere. The chances for the quick recovery of a patient in such a bracing, uplifting atmosphere are ten to one compared with those of a patient held down in a gloomy environment by a despondent, pessimistic atmosphere. Good cheer has wooed many a sufferer back to health. Uplift thoughts have a healing balm. They are helpful to every physical and mental process, because they produce mental harmony; and every thought, every mood, every emotion which tends to produce mental harmony pro-



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duces physical harmony, improves the health, increases the strength of every faculty, and hence increases our power, our efficiency.

Just think what it would mean to us if we could learn to hold constantly in the mind, mechanically at first, if necessary, helpful, hopeful, unselfish, cheerful, optimistic thoughts! Yet this is possible for every one. No matter how antagonistic our feeling or our particular mood may be at any time, we can, by using our will power, change it, neutralize, antidote it by a little mental chemistry. We have power to make ourselves perfectly miserable or radiantly happy. It depends entirely upon the sort of guests we entertain in our minds; whether we entertain our friend thoughts,—good cheer, love, joy, hope, health and life, or our enemy thoughts,—despondency, hatred, selfishness, envy and jealousy. We are free to choose. Each of us can say, “I am the master of my soul. I make my own destiny, and I am going to dictate the sort of mental guests I will entertain.”

Every time we look on the dark side, not with the thought of improving things, but just to pity ourselves; every time we complain or

find fault, we are only weakening our power of resistance and making our troubles worse. We are also acknowledging the power of our enemies to hold us down, to make life uncomfortable, disagreeable, unendurable. The way to get rid of these enemies of our happiness is to open our avenues of joy and to drive them out of the mind; for, after all, they are only delusions. Harmony, health, beauty, success,—these are the realities. Their opposites are only the absence of the real.

A great many people have brought sick, discordant bodies back to harmony by opening wide the avenues of joy, by persistently looking on the bright side of things. By turning from the dark side, by substituting cheerfulness for fretting, worrying and complaining, they have rebuilt their bodies and renewed their souls.

We can all be good-cheer philosophers if we will. We can learn to wipe out of our minds all sick thoughts, all disease thoughts, all poverty thoughts, all failure thoughts, all doubt thoughts, and to replace them with their opposites,—helpful, uplifting thoughts.

Our minds are concentrated entirely too

much upon our ailments, our bodily discords, our fancied troubles and trials, our fancied injuries. We are too self-absorbed. We look inward too much, and not enough outward. He was a great philosopher who said, "I try as much as I can to let nothing distress me, and to take everything that happens as for the best. I believe that this is a duty and that we sin in not so doing."

It is astonishing what tremendous force to transform one's environment and aid toward realizing our dreams there is in a persistent, determined effort to look on the bright side, the hopeful, optimistic side of everything; to refuse to see the black, the ugly, the discordant side. A firm resolution, an inflexible determination, can completely transform the most inhospitable surroundings and bring victory out of the blackest defeat.

A courageous mother, by persistent cheerfulness, by an unwavering optimistic faith that somehow things will come out right in the end,—that there is a power beyond the control of circumstances that will help her if she does her best,—has often wrought miracles in the midst of the most disheartening surroundings. This



cheerful, inflexible faith has wrung a competency out of the direst poverty, has sent the boy or the girl to college in spite of the "impossible," has paid the mortgage off the home when it seemed little less than a miracle, has helped the invalid son or daughter, brother or sister, to achieve a worthy success.

Cheerful, encouraging people create a vitalizing, success-generating atmosphere. They radiate strength and courage; they bring new life to those who have physical infirmities. Their indomitable spirit helps them to overcome obstacles and to encourage others. Helen Keller said, "Although the world is full of suffering, it is full of the overcoming of it." What a rebuke are such words, coming from a deaf, dumb and blind girl, to those who have all their senses intact! This girl, handicapped as she is, always keeps her avenues of joy open, always, in season and out of season, preaches the gospel of hope, of joyousness.

Another brave soul, handicapped all his life by ill health, and much of the time by poverty, did more to scatter sunshine, to cheer, encourage and uplift than a dozen ordinary well people. Read Robert Louis Stevenson's "Let-

ters" for yourself, and see how well they bear out the testimony of one who said, "One cannot fail to be struck by the buoyant and joyous note in Stevenson, whose whole life was a struggle with disease. By pure will power he prevented physical pain from mastering his spirit. He felt that a man's duty is to be cheery and helpful for the sake of others, and that it is a miserably poor thing to let one's own suffering shadow others' lives. Hence this heroic soul in a weak body was a happiness maker, both in his home circle and in that larger circle touched by his books."

"Be of good cheer!" How many times this was repeated in the Savior's sayings. Even when his heart was rent with anguish, He urged His disciples to "be of good cheer," and further He said,—“And your heart shall rejoice;” and “Your joy no man shall take from you.” Joy can never enter our souls, happiness can never be ours, until we form a habit of cheerful, helpful, optimistic thinking. It is this sort of thought which not only radiates soul sunshine but also sharpens the faculties, multiplies efficiency, and enables us to produce our best.

Our thoughts start vibrations like themselves, which never cease in their influence, and whatever we think about at any particular moment is a force which is not only shaping our own lives, but is also influencing every one in our community. We can only radiate what is in our mind. If we hold a gloomy, discouraged, sick or diseased thought, it will be reflected in our personality, in our physical, mental and moral being. If, on the other hand, we hold a cheerful, optimistic, helpful thought, this also will have its corresponding effect upon every cell in the body; it will be uplifting, life-giving, efficiency-generating, happiness-making.

We were created for happiness. If we are miserable it is because we persist in holding gloomy thoughts, in looking upon the dark instead of the bright side of the picture. "You were made for enjoyment," said Ruskin, "and the world was filled with things which you will enjoy, unless you are too grasping to care for what you cannot turn to other account than mere delight."

Not long ago, when traveling on the Pacific Coast, I recalled this when I saw a man walk-



ing through the magnificent Golden Gate Park in San Francisco with his eyes riveted to the ground. An anxious, resentful, hard, selfish expression was on his face, and he looked neither to the right hand nor to the left. All about him beauties unspeakable of earth and sea and sky were bombarding him for attention, appealing for his appreciation and enjoyment, but he was blind to them.

Self-absorption, grasping greed, blocks the avenues of joy and shuts off many of the good things that would otherwise come into our lives. The self-centered, those who are always thinking of their own pleasure and happiness, who will trample on the rights and feelings of others in order to secure them, never know what real enjoyment is. They are so absorbed in their hunt for self-gratification or for the dollar that they do not know they are closing the doors on far higher joys than they can ever know in their selfish chase for pleasure.

Most of us are practically blind to the marvelous beauties that are seeking admittance to our minds from the commonest everyday sources. Preoccupation in our troubles, real or imaginary, or dissatisfaction with our life's

portion shuts us out from enjoyment of the most beautiful and wonderful things in the universe; things so precious that money cannot buy them, but which are free to all, prince and peasant alike. Yet these things were all planned for our enjoyment. As that beautiful poet soul Lucy Larcom, says, "He who turns the world upon its axis, so as to cause the changes of the seasons, meant us to receive some new happiness from every one of them. 'He hath made everything beautiful in its time,' and if we were as grateful as He is good, how would the seasons one and all ring with hymns of thanksgiving."

Nature is one vast garden of Eden, packed full of indescribable loveliness, which softly, persistently, insistently calls to us for recognition and appreciation. But our senses are so dulled, so stupefied by our own selfish interests and sordid ambitions that we do not hear, we do not see, we do not feel it. We are so preoccupied that we close the gates of our eyes to all this appealing beauty; we shut the portals of our ears to the sweet sounds, to entrancing music which would ravish the angels; we shut up all the avenues of joy through which

might flow to us refreshment for soul and body.

Now and then, in our mad chase for the dollar, we stop and look and listen for an instant. And behold, what marvelous things flow into our souls! What beauties flood our minds! What sweet harmonies of nature fill our ears! A moment ago we did not hear the music of the birds, or the sweet soughing of the wind in the treetops; we did not see the waving of the grass in the meadows; we were not conscious of the wondrous beauties all around us. For a moment we seem to be in another world, a world of unsurpassed loveliness, of sweetness, of harmony, a world free from care or jar or fret of any kind. But our selfish quest, our self-absorption soon closes the Gate Beautiful, seals up the avenues of joy and harmony, and we pass on, buried again in absorption, in indifference, voluntarily depriving ourselves of all that the Creator is trying to give us, for our healing, our uplift, our encouragement and happiness.

The Swedish innkeeper who had inscribed on the walls of his inn the legend, "You will find at Trochate excellent bread, meat, and wine, provided you bring them with you," must



have had an intimate knowledge of human nature. No matter where we go, we are sure to find whatever we carry in our mind. We must carry our holiday with us or we shall not find it anywhere. Our thought world transforms the outer world to its likeness. We are just beginning to learn that whether we shall be happy or miserable depends entirely upon ourselves. We are beginning to realize that man carries the great panacea for all his ills within himself, that the antidote for the worst human poisons—the poisons of selfishness, of envy, of jealousy, of hatred, of anger, of false ambition, of impurity, of all evil thoughts and passions,—exists in our own mind in the form of love, charity, and good-will essences. These are the avenues of joy which open up to us the sources of all good.

The reason why life is a great disappointment to so many is that we have not been trained to choose our thought guests, the thoughts that make for happiness, that uplift and encourage, that bring sunshine, hope, and joy into our lives. We have not been trained in right thinking, and we close the avenues of joy by allowing hostile thoughts, which bring

blackness, despair, and discouragement, to make their homes in our mind. So long as we entertain such guests, we cannot be happy.

When we use our mental powers as the Creator intended we should use them, no one will be seen going through this beautiful world, packed as it is with everything imaginable for our happiness and comfort, with long, gloomy faces and sad expressions as if there had been some mistake in our being placed in such unfortunate circumstances, in such an unhappy environment,—as if our life had been a disappointment and a mistake.

Every one will then feel as Thoreau did, and be ready to exclaim, with him, “I have never gotten over my surprise that I should have been born in the most estimable place in the world, and in the very nick of time.”

## CHAPTER XVII

### LIVING IN THE FINER SENSES

“IF this life is not a real fight in which something is eternally gained for the Universe,” says Professor William James, “it is no better than a game of private theatricals. But it *feels* like a real fight, as if there were something really wild in the Universe, which we with our idealities and faithfulness are needed to reform.”

There is no more real fight than that which is being waged perpetually between man's higher and lower nature. If this lower nature triumphs; if one elects to live only in his coarser animal nature, in his lower senses, he pays for his choice in coin of his finer nature, in the gradual atrophy of his noblest qualities.

The lower part of the brain was intended merely to serve the higher faculties, not to minister to the further development of a purely animal existence. The higher living must be



carried on in the upper, the finer part of the brain, where beauty, ideality, sentiment, benevolence, reverence, freely function. Until that fine portion of the brain is developed, we do not taste the real joy of life. Living in the ideal makes the commonplace beautiful, increases the depth and the range of one's sources of happiness, enriches life and makes more significant every attribute of one's personality.

Those who live mainly in their animal instincts, in the base of their brain, who do not rise into the upper stories of their being, who never develop the upper brain where ideality, the higher ambitions and loftier sentiments are born, have a much more circumscribed range of perceptions and of enjoyment than those who live in that cleaner atmosphere of the ideal.

The "eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die" philosophy of life is the most fraudulent of all material philosophies, for it never yet has brought its disciples real or enduring happiness.

The supreme object of life should be to raise personal value. A broad mental outlook, a love of the beautiful, an appreciation of the

finer things of life—these are of infinitely more importance than the mere amassing of dollars, the piling up of luxuries that simply deaden or cover up our spiritual nature and smother our higher aspirations. We all know people who starve to death spiritually while their material storehouses are packed to overflowing with everything that money can buy. The most valuable human food is not purchasable. It is beyond the reach of man-made money, yet it is within the reach of every soul that aspires, that chooses to live in that world where the finer senses are legal tender for the finest good of life.

The perpetual effort to spiritualize the cells of the body into such refinement, sensitiveness and delicacy that we may become more and more perfect “wireless stations” to receive finer vibrations will give us such happiness as the gratification of the coarser senses never can secure. All our senses may be keyed to finer perceptions. The cultivation of our higher ideals will lift our lives and our work above triviality and commonness.

There were plenty of paint grinders in Millet's time who called themselves artists, but

they could not see what Millet saw in the landscape. They did not have the sympathy, the delicacy of perception necessary to see and to put on canvas the deeper vision that Millet saw, and reproduced for the delight and uplift of all those who shall come after him.

The majority of us are still in the hold of the great ship Humanity, looking out of the portholes. They are the exceptions who climb to the upper decks and vision the wide horizon of a higher world. It is only here and there some rare soul ascends to the lookout of the huge ship, senses the truth and beauty away above reach of the physical senses, and inhabits a spiritual realm more real to him than the physical universe is to the average man or woman.

Few people ever get anything more than a mere glimpse of the true glory of life. Many of us do not sense any real sentiment in our days or see anything above the animal existence, the animal pleasures. We look upon our daily occupation as a disagreeable necessity that somehow or other might have been, and ought to have been avoided, whereas, if our finer perceptions were more keen we would see



the underlying beauty, the infusing spirituality that makes the most commonplace work or circumstances a means of growth. We settle down to the treadmill of workaday existence and let the routine of work run furrows in our souls. Most of us do not really live. We merely exist like a jelly-fish, or a clam, in the lower functionings, while our finer senses dwarf for lack of use.

This does not mean that material things are to be ignored, but that everything should be made to yield its tribute to the functioning of higher powers. We all need money. It is our medium of exchange for many of the good things of life. But money and the honorable getting of money can be made to serve the purpose of the finer senses, for, "It's the set of the soul that decides the goal." The whole gamut of the lower senses may be used, if only one lives in the finer senses, in the upper stories of life. Some millionaires are splendid examples of the possibility of making and spending money in a way that will benefit all humanity.

It is an excellent thing to acquire executive ability, to cultivate the faculty to turn possibilities into realities—the genius which does

things, brings about great material results. We protest only against the false estimate of the executive faculties, against their being placed above the higher and nobler qualities of brain and heart. They can and frequently do exist side by side, and when the lower is made to serve the higher we have one of the highest, finest and most useful types of mankind.

Take the ex-President of Harvard, Charles W. Eliot. If he had gone into business for the purpose of making money, does any one doubt that his consummate executive ability, his splendid qualities of leadership would have placed him among the foremost American financiers of our time? Yet here is one of the finest intellects on the American continent, who worked for a lifetime for less salary than some stenographers and many private secretaries receive. Think of the influence of his character, his example, and his personal influence on the thousands of young men who have passed through Harvard during the long term of his presidency! Think of what his commanding business and executive ability has done for Harvard itself in raising it from a comparatively humble college to the

proud rank of one of the greatest universities in the world! Compare what he has accomplished with the work of some money-grubbing millionaire who has amassed millions, but who has robbed others and robbed his own soul in the process!

We all know men who are pointed out as very successful millionaires and multi-millionaires, men who started as poor boys and yet succeeded in spite of great obstacles in making vast fortunes. But they have failed in the chief business of life. They have failed to bring out their larger possible manhood, failed to develop the finest, superbest qualities of human nature, the qualities that make a man a masterpiece of God.

A man ought to be so much larger than anything he piles about himself, he ought to tower so far above his possessions that they would scarcely be noticed because of the superiority of his own great dominant character. The reverse is true in the case of the man who has sacrificed his higher to his lower nature.

In an examination of a millionaire who had coined his whole life into dollars, we should find that he was a tremendous failure as a man,



that he would stand away below many of the employees who had helped make his fortune, and whose careers also he had tried to grind into dollars.

When one allows mere things to dictate his entire career, his coming and going, his life policy, he evolves a pretty small specimen of a man. A human being who is a mere puppet, tossed hither and thither by his fortune, who is its slave, as it were, merely a guard, to watch over it, is indeed a pitiful sight. On the other hand, what an inspiring sight is a real human giant, a noble soul, a great manly man who so towers above and completely dominates his possessions that they are mere tools in his hands, which he uses to help and inspire others! If he has a fortune, he makes it a power for good because he is himself a superior force.

Without the leaven of this type of man and woman the outlook for humanity would be a gloomy one. Fortunately this leaven is working everywhere. Though we hear a great deal about the passion for wealth dwarfing American ideals, and though in many directions this is only too true, when we get beneath the froth and the noise, we find nevertheless that there

are still "a goodly company" of American men and women who have not been touched by the money taint, but who are making heroic sacrifices for their ideals.

The people about whom we know most, who make most noise in the world, who bask in the sun of fame or fortune are not always our most useful and helpful citizens. There are tens of thousands of men and women in this country to-day whose names have never been heralded in the papers, who have no reputation outside of their own humble circle, but who are adding more to the real greatness of American history than are many of those who live in the public eye. There are teachers and professors in our schools and universities who have ability of the highest order, and who are rendering invaluable service to the world in elevating the ideals of American youth and giving them a noble start in life.

These men and women could sell their brain power, their executive and organizing ability in other markets that would pay them a far higher price; but they follow their ideals, sacrifice for their ideals, and in doing so enrich themselves and the world to a far greater ex-

tent than they could by coining their great gifts into dollars. And there are shopgirls, seamstresses, mechanics, day laborers, humble toiling fathers and mothers, laborers in all fields, helping others to go forward, to climb the heights to which they had aspired, but failed to reach. Who shall say that those noble self-sacrificing souls are not doing as great a work as those who play seemingly far more important rôles on the stage of life?

Be as ambitious as you please, provided you have an ambition to make your life work mean more than merely earning a living or acquiring a fortune. The man has never yet been born who was able to develop the best within him while his whole life was absorbed by the passion for wealth. It is the motive behind the career that dominates the life. Where the treasure is, there the heart is also. The direction of the longing, of the yearning, fixes the direction of the life development. We cannot aspire when we continually look down. With the eye fixed on sordid wealth, the higher ideal fades, becomes dimmer and dimmer as the material treasures grow brighter and more attractive. We cannot go in opposite directions at



the same time. We must follow the dominant motive, and we grow finer or coarser in the fiber of our being as our thoughts express themselves more in the higher or the lower senses.

Many young men who leave school or college with high aims and responsive natures open to all that is good and fine in life do not have the strength of individuality to say and to do what their souls prompt. They quench many an impulse toward higher, finer living, for fear of ridicule or criticism. Or they allow themselves to be drawn aside from their ideal by mercenary considerations. Then they are astonished to find that in a few years they have lost their taste for the finer things of life, and have developed instead a monster greed, a passion for mere money-making. The direction of the ideal has been changed. They have been looking down instead of up, and the level of life follows the direction of the gaze, the trend of constant effort. They are no longer at home among high ideals, their finer senses have become dulled.

A lofty aim and a firm purpose to adhere to it strengthen character and add dignity and beauty to life, while an ambition that grovels,

that looks down, weakens the character, demoralizes the whole being. Sometimes we try to hide, even from ourselves, our real aims and motives, but this cannot be done. Every one who knows us sees which way we are going, whether upward or downward, whether we are aspiring or wallowing. No pretense can deceive the world as to the road we have elected to travel, and the aspiring soul, the one who is struggling to get up as well as to get on, but who will allow no allurements to draw him from the straight path of his highest ideal, wins the respect and admiration of all.

One of the most pitiable sights in the world is a man approaching old age with a large part of his higher brain cells "out of business"; with all that is best crushed out of his life, strangled, starved, blighted by neglect, trying to enjoy things which, though they meant much to him in his young days, are now but memories; his appreciation of them dead. Their deeper meaning only mocks him because he has no capacity left for enjoying them. Such a man, though his fortune run into billions, is but a beggar. He would exchange all his wealth for the capacity to enjoy nature as he did when a boy.

“ ‘Take what you will,’ said the gods to mortals, ‘and pay for it,’ ” is an old Persian proverb. “You can’t eat your cake and keep it, too,” is but a homelier way of putting the same truth. Life is a great balance sheet and the man has not been born who has found a way to tamper with the totals or to get around God. The soul holds us inexorably to our accounting and carries out the final reckoning to the uttermost farthing. We cannot escape the law. If we sacrifice the higher to the lower, sooner or later we come to a final reckoning and we must pay the price.

It was that splendid type of manhood, Phillips Brooks, who said, “We feel the thing we ought to be beating beneath the thing we are.” It is the continual reproach of the thing we ought to be beating beneath the thing we are that makes many of us disgusted with ourselves, dissatisfied with life. It is the ghost of the lost good that drives thousands to drown memory with the cruel drug, or the convivial glass. They want to forget, to silence the everlasting reminder of what they might have been.

It is the feeling of the thing he ought to be



beating beneath the thing he is that makes the keenest suffering for the repentant wrongdoer. The consciousness that he has made a wrong choice in life is the hardest thing for the remorseful criminal to bear. The contrast between what he is and what he might have been perpetually haunts him.

It is the constant response to the higher self, the daily effort to be what we ought to be, that forever urges us upward. This is the secret of all growth. It is the triumph of the higher over the lower. It is the only way to accumulate real wealth, which is personal value.

Pure gold does not suffer any deterioration or loss from the severest fire test, because there is no dross, nothing that the fire can touch. If you have kept growing, broadening your mental horizon; if through experience you have accumulated wisdom which is more precious than rubies; if through the years you have constantly followed your highest ideal, then there is nothing that can affect your great interior wealth, with which no material resources can compare. If you have mastered self you are really rich; you have a serenity, a mental balance, a poise which no calamity or loss can touch.

There are times when we come face to face with a situation that makes us think about the trend of our lives pretty seriously. When sickness brings us very near to death, or when those dear to us are taken from us, or some other great sorrow or catastrophe comes to us, then many of the things which absorb our attention and fill our minds,—things like the getting of money—seem in a moment to lose the great emphasis we had placed upon them, the exclusive significance we had given them. Their importance seems to fade away at such times and the realities of life again swim vividly into our vision. These are the great life lessons which show us that we have been placing the emphasis on the wrong things. These are the things that bring us back to ourselves, and make us think very seriously of the value of what we are losing in letting our finer senses grow dull and finally depart from us altogether.

Not long ago a business man, who for many years had been driving at a fearful pace for wealth, said he had just had one of the greatest shocks of his life. A man who in earlier days had been his dearest friend, his closest

companion, had suddenly died. For years the man of wealth had thought he could not spare time even to answer his friend's letter, or to go see him, but now he would give anything in the world if he could go back and take up again this sweet companionship, reunite the threads of this beautiful friendship, broken by neglect, and let it keep fresh the finer feelings of his own nature.

The habit of hurrying, so common in our work-a-day life; the feeling most of us have that we cannot take time to cultivate the beautiful things of life, is responsible for an amazing amount of callousness in the finer perceptions and valuations. In our haste to board a street car or make a train we so often ignore the amenities of life,—slight the finer relations, slur the deeper meanings,—that eventually we lose sight of them altogether, and boarding a car looms bigger on our daily horizon than greeting a brother, or cheering a friend.

It is a good thing every little while to sit down by one's self and think deeply, seriously on the trend of our life—to question what we are doing and what our real aims are, to try to discern which way we are heading, and to pick



out of the tangled mass the real essentials of life, the only things that endure, that count in the final reckoning.

Just call a halt in the mad rush of the days, once in a while, and ask yourself seriously if, after all, you are putting the emphasis on the right things. See whether you are giving proper time and attention and interest to the things that are really worth while. When you face the realities of life through the vision of some great sorrow or the loss of those dearer to you than your life, will the things that engross your attention seem as important as they do now?

Depend upon it, if you feel the emptiness of life, if it has lost its old-time flavor, there is something wrong in yourself and not in the life. Your taste has been perverted. You are living in the swamps of your being instead of on the mountain tops.

Our nervous, exciting, strenuous existence tends to make us overlook the common beauties and interests of life. Even the trivial things in our every-day path are full of inexpressible beauty and meaning if our perceptions were but fine and keen enough to sense

them. Try to recall how the commonest things delighted you in childhood. What thrills of joy you used to feel at the coming of the birds and the blossoms of the spring! How you loved to see the bees flit from flower to flower, to listen to the bob-o-link and the cricket; what a keen enjoyment you got out of the mere beauty of a summer day!

The coming man will certainly not allow the attention of his godlike mind to be completely absorbed in supplying the animal side of himself. His main efforts will be put forth in developing his finer qualities. The immortal side will not be sacrificed to the mortal, the transitory, existence. The coming man will look at life from the range of eternity, and, realizing that only the finer senses endure, he will devote his supreme attention to the cultivation of his higher qualities, his spiritual nature.

THE END

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*N. A. Carking,*

*Sales Mgr., Ford Motor Company.*

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By ORISON SWETT MARDEN

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